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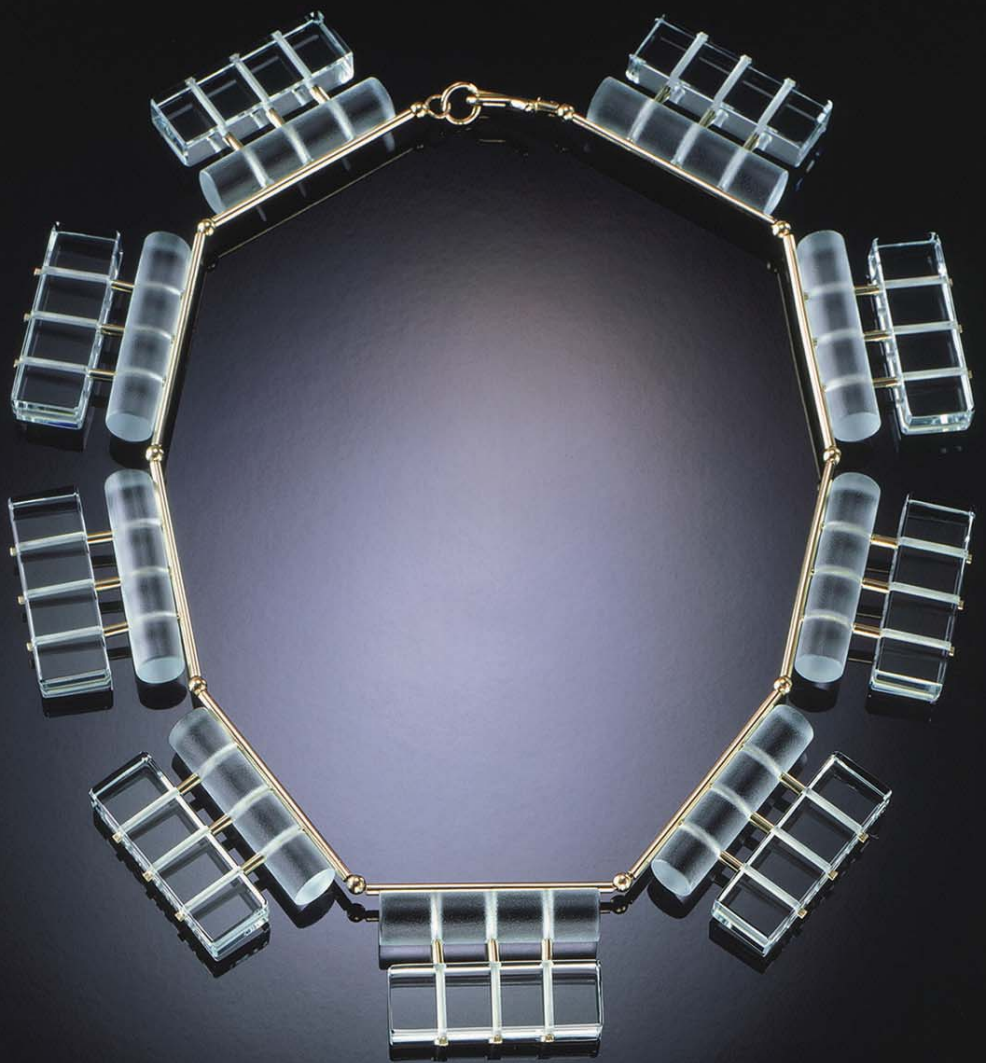

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Linda MacNeil. *Necklace No. 4* from the "Lucent Lines" series, 1984. Plate glass, 14k yellow gold; 20 1/2 x 7/8 x 1/4 in. (52.1 x 2.2 x 0.6 cm) (open). Collection of Joan and Jay Ochroch. Photo by Susie Cushner.

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The mission of *Metalsmith* magazine is to document, analyze, and promote excellence in jewelry and metalsmithing. In fulfillment of the goal of producing a significant document of the field, editorial content will emphasize contemporary activities and ideas, with supportive content to include relevant historical work and critical issues.

It is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the newly redesigned *Metalsmith*. As your editorial host, I'd like to walk you through the changes we've wrought, under the deft hand of graphic designer Luke Hayman and his Pentagram team. Akin to an architectural remodeling, we've made a number of structural and design alterations, without gutting or razing the entire publication. Our goal was to create a more stimulating and accommodating environment for our readers to dwell and make discoveries in. With a larger trim size, the magazine is now roomier and comes with added amenities.

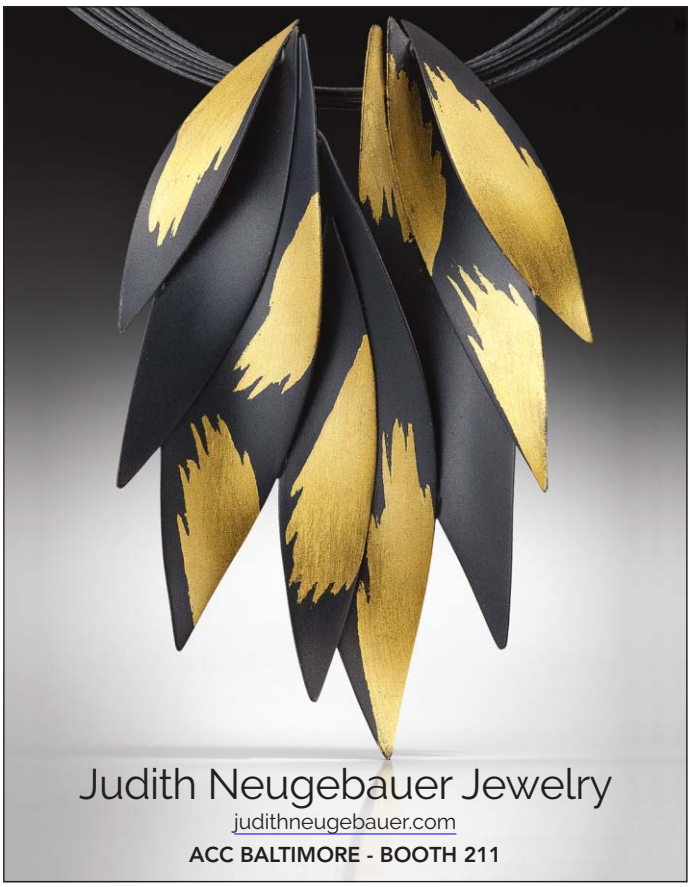
We begin our tour at the door, with the transformed cover. By separating the words "metal" and "smith," the new title treatment underscores both the prime medium and practice within the field. While not all works in the magazine are made of metal, they all involve smithing both in the traditional sense of *smiting* and more broadly as the act of crafting materials, whether it be ingots or words. The other bold shift is our use of multiple cover photos, rather than one dominant image. This approach allows us to declare upfront the striking multiplicity of metalsmithing today, and herald the diversity that awaits inside.

Upon entering, the reader will find a more dynamic infrastructure, with the use of varied column widths, assorted fonts, layered text, and playful headings. The vertical axis has been activated throughout, a direction signaled by the cover's corner title. These and other touches help animate the page and *snag* the restless eye.

A similar variety enlivens the editorial contents, which blend traditional and contemporary, jewelry and objects, the expected and unpredictable. Added to this mix is a brand new department called "Findings," which gathers timely and relevant stories from across the cultural spectrum.

In the end, all these modifications strive to promote the exciting and ever-changing world of metalsmithing. Please let us know if you enjoy your visit here, and whether there is something we might do to enhance your stay....

—Suzanne Ramljak, Editor



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NEXUS: A Connection Of Ideas

Nicknamed the “Big Easy,” New Orleans is known for its round-the-clock nightlife, vibrant live-music scene, and exceptional cuisine. A melting pot of French, African, and American cultures, it is one of the country’s most culturally and historically-rich cities. Its beauty, mystery and continuous regeneration is the perfect backdrop and inspiration for SNAG’s 46th conference, NEXUS: A Connection of Ideas.

“NEXUS: A Connection of Ideas” will focus on motivating thinkers, collectors, and makers to bring new and old, materials, techniques, and ideas together in a true New Orleans celebration.

NEXUS has three sub-themes

Ornamentation

Decoration or to make something more elaborate, to adorn, or to embellish.

Decadence

Excessive indulgence in pleasure or luxury.

Masquerade

A clever disguise, things are not as they seem, a double take.

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Erica Bello
Holland Houdek
Zachery Lechtenberg
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Mallory Weston

LUNCHTIME TALKS:
Bella Neyman
Casey Shepard
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PRE/POST CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS:

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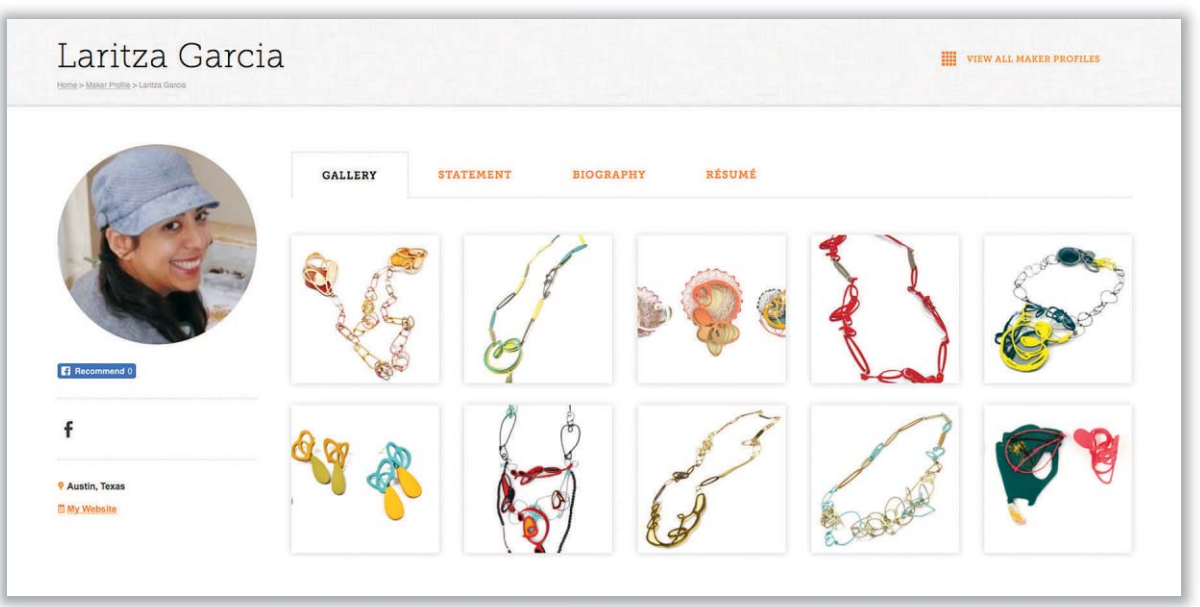

SNAG Maker Profiles is a robust online reference where you can find professional quality jewelry and objects that excite and engage!

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A great resource for:

- Curators, gallery professionals, and retailers
- Artists, academics, and historians
- Fashion designers, editors, and stylists
- Curious consumers

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NEW & NOTABLE

BY KATE FOGARTY

This limited-edition champlevé I.M.A.G.I.N.E pin was given to Kickstarter donors of $75 or more. Created by Leslie W. LePere, based on Eric McManus's logo design, it was made by Charlie King of Sandy Parr.

BORIS BALLY'S DREAM OF PEACE BECOMES REALITY

The innovative "I.M.A.G.I.N.E. Peace Now" exhibition opens at Boston's Society of Arts & Crafts in February 2017, after an auspicious opening at Wellington B. Gray Gallery at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Organized by artist Boris Bally, the exhibition features more than 100 works made from decommissioned firearms by artists from the U.S. and six other countries. All works are for sale, and a percentage of the proceeds is being donated to the Brady Campaign, the Rhode Island Coalition Against Gun Violence, and the Society of North American Goldsmiths.

The *Innovative Merger of Art & Guns to Inspire New Expressions (or I.M.A.G.I.N.E.) Peace Now* exhibition is "a call to arms, hearts, and hands intended especially for metal artists" conceived by Bally, a Swiss-trained metalsmith-designer based in Providence, Rhode Island. Bally was moved to action by the prevalence of gun violence in the U.S., citing a 2010 study that found that the firearm homicide rate is 20 times higher in the U.S. than the combined rates of 22 peer countries. "As metalsmiths, we harness skills to alter guns to produce sculpture; the notion of turning Swords into Plowshares," incites Bally's call for proposals.

Bally selected the works along with jurors Emily Zilber, Curator of Contemporary Decorative Arts, Boston Museum of Fine Arts; Monica Moses, Editor in Chief, *American Craft* magazine; and artist and activist Shepard Fairey. As artists were selected, they were sent a disabled gun, which they then transformed into an "(un)loaded" object of art.

In 21st-century fashion, Bally created a Kickstarter campaign to fund the exhibition catalogue, and attracted 316 supporters from the U.S. and other countries. The campaign exceeded its $50,000 goal by more than $5,000, and allowed Bally and his team to publish and distribute a four-color, professionally designed and photographed catalogue, printed in the U.S. "What strikes me the most are the kind letters, enthusiasm, and 250 percent participation that the artists put into this," says Bally. "I am filled with pride and deeply moved that all the artists trusted that I would represent their work and interests fully."

Stacey Lee Webber
Specimen Handgun #1, 2016
sliced handgun

WHOOPI'S JEWELRY TURNS HEADS AT FASHION WEEK

The runways at New York Fashion Week always feature trend-setting jewelry and accessories, and the Spring 2017 collections, presented in October of last year, were no exception.

Alphonse Mucha and George Fouquet
The Serpent, 1899
gold, enamel, opals, rubies, diamonds

Actress Sarah Bernhardt wearing 1899 *The Serpent* bracelet

Whoopi Goldberg's Facebook photo of her wearing Elisa Meligari's bracelet at New York Fashion Week

Elisa Melegari
The Dragon, 2016
18k yellow gold, vitreous enamel, diamonds, opals, platinum chain
Photo: Patsy Croft

But it was actually an intriguing piece, worn off the runway but *on* actress and "The View" co-host Whoopi Goldberg, that captured *Metalsmith's* attention and that of many fashionistas. *The Dragon* is a one-of-a-kind bracelet and ring ensemble of 18k yellow gold, vitreous enamel, diamonds, opals, and a platinum chain. It is the stunning result of a two-year collaboration by artists Elisa Meligari and Patsy Croft, brought together in a series of fortuitous twists of fate.

Meligari, fresh out of Boston's Massachusetts College of Arts and Design, was contacted by her cousin, Tom Leonardus, who is Goldberg's agent and producing partner, in 2014 about a striking 1899 Art Nouveau piece that Goldberg was obsessed with: *The Serpent,* designed by Alphonse Mucha and executed by George Fouquet for actress Sarah Bernhardt.

Though she did not know it at the time, Meligari later learned that Goldberg is a seasoned art collector. "She has a fine appreciation for handmade goods and artists in general," she says. "On the set of 'The View' every day, she wears a new pair of shoes, and they are often handmade or one of a kind. She loves Art Nouveau."

Goldberg had long wanted to commission a custom piece inspired by *The Serpent*; did Meligari think she could create one? "I couldn't turn down the opportunity," she says. Working in her living room, "it took me five months to figure out how to carve the ring and bracelet." When it began to take form, Meligari met with Goldberg, who indicated that she wanted a gold enameled piece with stones.

"I realized I was going to need to find someone who could enamel on gold, so I emailed a bunch of enamellists," says Meligari. Enter Patsy Croft, a seasoned cloisonné artist in Rhode Island (now located in Alabama). The two communicated through

phone and email; Meligari shipped the wax prototype to Croft, who then cast a silver version, which after some tweaking, she then cast in gold and enameled. "From the beginning [Croft] has been a mentor to me," says Meligari. "I was so new to this world of jewelry making, and she has been so wonderful. I view this as a collaboration between us."

Meligari then set the stones (after attending a three-month intensive stonesetting and engraving program at New Approach School for Jewelers in Tennessee), and had just finished the work about a month before its debut at Fashion Week. "[Goldberg] was really excited about the piece," says Meligari, "and said, 'I have to pick and choose when I want to wear it,'" as its dramatic design is not soon forgotten. "I had no idea [Goldberg] wanted to wear it to Fashion Week." She received the news via text from her cousin: Goldberg had proudly posted photos of herself on Facebook wearing *The Dragon*.

After a whirlwind two years, the 24-year-old artist has just put the finishing touches on her own Highland Park, New Jersey, studio, and hopes to continue doing commissions, as well as a jewelry line.

WERE THE FIRST JEWELERS NEANDERTALS?

The desire to adorn ourselves is inherently human—and, recent research shows, may even *predate* humankind. A method that relies on ancient proteins to identify and directly date Neandertal bone fragments (a new field known as *paleoproteomics*) seems to settle the decades-long debate about an archeological find in central France. Tiny "necklaces"—beads of animal teeth, shells, and ivory not even a centimeter long—were discovered between 1949 and 1963 in the Grotte du Renne cave alongside delicate bone tools, nestled in the same earth layers as Neandertal fossils. While some have maintained over the years that these were created by the Neandertals (known as the Châtelperronian culture), others have argued that our forebears were incapable of such cognitive abilities, and that bones from a newer layer must have gotten mixed up with these artifacts.

Science Magazine reports that Matthew Collins, a bioarchaeologist at the University of York in the United Kingdom and a pioneer in the study of ancient proteins, working with the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany, compared the chemical composition of the collagen in these bone fragments with the collagen produced by modern humans. (Not to get too esoteric, but modern human collagen is high in a certain amino acid; Neandertals' collagen was high in another.) That research, paired with direct radiocarbon dating of the sample, shows that the fragments are about 42,000 years old, consistent with the age of the beads and tools. The

New research suggests these body ornaments and bone points may have been fashioned by Neandertals.

Photo: Dr. Marian Vanheren

results were published last September in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

While paleoanthrolopologists are working out the impact of these findings—Were these last Neandertals "smarter," having no doubt mated with humans? Did they take these items from their new human neighbors and alter them?—former doubter, researcher Thomas Higham of the University of Oxford, now tells *Science*, "I think it is quite possible that Neandertals were capable of making and using personal ornaments."

GRANTING MID-CAREER ARTISTS ROOM TO THINK

San Francisco-based collector Susan Beech recently announced that she will fund a new $20,000 mid-career artist grant. This international grant, administered under the auspices of the nonprofit organization Art Jewelry Forum, is the largest grant currently available to established jewelry artists.

The cash grant will be awarded to an artist who is making an active contribution to the art jewelry world, and is between 35 and 55 years old at the time of the proposal deadline. It will be funded over two years. The grant will alternate years with the Art Jewelry Forum's Artist Award, which recognizes early career artists.

Beech told Susan Cummins of Art Jewelry Forum that the grant is intended to offer mid-career artists "breathing room to think, to be creative, to not feel so much pressure...I've heard firsthand stories from jewelry artists who work full time in unfulfilling jobs and they just don't have the energy to even think about being creative," she said.

Beech hopes the grant will allow a seasoned artist to conceive of a new body of work, a book or catalog, performance art involving jewelry, research and development in the medium, or another passion project. The deadline for the first grant is around the time of this writing; besides Beech, the other jurors include artist and academic Iris Eichenberg and museum curator Cindi Strauss. "As a collector, I think about the artists," says Beech. "While my grant only helps one artist every two years, maybe this grant might encourage other collectors, galleries, businesses to fund a grant of their own." The winner will be announced in March.

Furthermore: www.artjewelryforum.org

Susan Beech in the Munich studio of jeweler David Bielander, wearing his *Snake* necklace.

Photo: Susan Cummins, 2013

JEWELRY BY SUZANNE BELPERRON: MY STYLE IS MY SIGNATURE

BY KATE FOGARTY

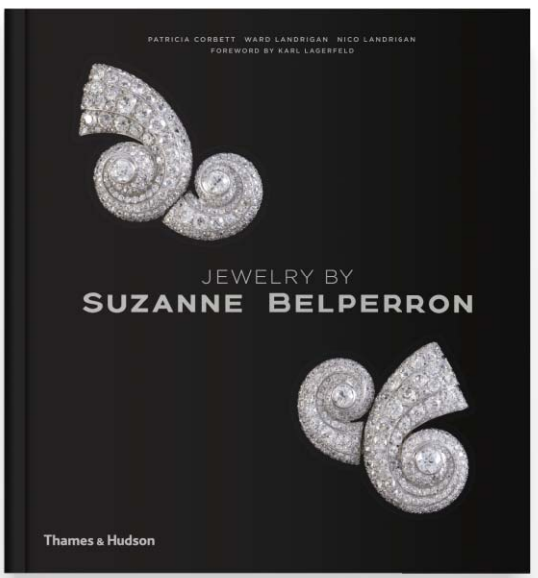
By Patricia Corbett, Ward Landrigan and Nico Landrigan

London: Thames & Hudson, 2015

TO SPEND SEVERAL hours poring over the book *Jewelry by Suzanne Belperron* is to be blissfully immersed in the glamour, fashion, and texture of early- to mid 20th-century Paris, when figures like Matisse, Fitzgerald, and Schiaparelli walked the streets, and a golden cuff could command a spread in *Vogue*. Despite our nostalgia for that era, it was anything but "a simpler time." Belperron's story begins in an unheated flat in rural France, is interrupted by World War II, weaves themes of infidelity, imprisonment, and business intrigue, and features countless luminaries. And it's illustrated with pages and pages of spectacular, expertly crafted jewels that look as modern and provocative as anything produced today.

As head of Sotheby's jewelry department in the '60s and '70s, Ward Landrigan became fascinated by Belperron's work, and began to acquire it whenever he could. Since she never signed her work, it was difficult to attribute. Even at the famed Duchess of Windsor auction at Sotheby's in 1987, many Belperron pieces were sold without attribution.

After his purchase of the esteemed jewelry company Verdura in 1989, Landrigan was invited by an elderly master craftsman named Jean-Pierre Brun to see a selection of Belperron's designs. When he realized the scope of her archive, and the thousands of designs never realized, Landrigan was aghast. Given that Verdura had shared many of the same clients with Belperron throughout the years, Brun and the partnership that was founded to protect Belperron's designs entrusted the company with a reintroduction of her work.



In 1991 Verdura offered a collection of 225 pieces of Belperron jewelry, created directly from and stringently to her original designs. The collection was soon a sellout. In 1998 Landrigan bought the Belperron name and copyright, having already begun work on this comprehensive book, which included the ambitious endeavor of locating and photographing the great Belperron collections in Paris, London, and the U.S. Karl Lagerfeld, longtime Chanel designer and unrivaled tastemaker, is a Belperron collector, and he wrote and photographed the book's Foreword. "I can identify a piece of jewelry designed by Suzanne Belperron among 100 other great pieces from other famous houses of her time," he asserts. "What I love in her work is the play of shine and shade." Indeed, the drama and sensuality of Belperron's work is striking.

Born in 1900, she was raised in the watchmaking center of Besançon. She was trained at the municipal art school, in night classes with no electricity and few supplies, yet at age 18 she won her first prize for jewelry design. Her early drawings featured here are clearly inspired by the antiquities she saw in the museums, trends of the day, even the distinctive powdery blue and beige limestone of the city's architecture.

By 19 Belperron was hired as a designer at Maison Boivin, one of the leading jewelry houses of Paris. It was presided over by Jeanne Boivin, the founder's widow, who was also the sister of fashion designer Paul Poiret. Known for its neo-Renaissance pieces, Boivin's about-face toward bold, modern *nouvelle joaillerie* quickly caught the attention of society; Belperron soon became its sole designer and co-directress. Though her drawings from that time are unsigned, they are easily identifiable, and the book takes care to educate us as to how.

Boivin flourished, and its designs were featured in *Vogue*. When asked why she refused to sign her jewelry, Belperron said, "My style is my signature." Though many prestigious companies tried to lure her away (including Van Cleef & Arpels, which offered to triple her salary), it was only after 13 years that she accepted the unlikely proposition of Bernard Herz, a well-respected supplier of diamonds and pearls to jewelers including Tiffany & Co. Though he was not a household name, Belperron valued the jewel and craftsmanship above all else, and she must have recognized in Herz a kindred spirit. The details of the care Belperron took in designing these jewels are fascinating. She would spend days with a client to discover "what her life was like, what her wrists and neck were like." Bracelets were mounted directly on the arm. Movie stars, socialites, and opera singers flocked to B. Herz. Soon Paris, and the future of B. Herz (under Jewish ownership), were threatened by World War II. In 1940 Herz transferred the business to Belperron's name, and when he was imprisoned, she managed it, creating leaner yet no less elegant pieces, despite urgent warnings to flee the city. (Belperron's and Herz's relationship had deepened beyond business.) She bribed authorities to orchestrate Herz's release from prison in 1942, though sadly he was convoyed to Auschwitz a few months later and killed. Herz's son, Jean, however, returned from being taken prisoner, penniless. Belperron offered the company back to him with no conditions, and in return, he gave her half of it; it was thus renamed Jean Herz-Suzanne Belperron.

As Europe struggled to rebuild, the company toiled to find its way in an atmosphere of austerity; the prewar taste for glamour had been replaced by a demand for less extravagant, more informal jewelry. But by the 1950s, Belperron's more colorful, large-scale pieces were again attracting the attention of Hollywood actresses like Lauren Bacall, writers such as Albert Camus, and Princess Grace of Monaco, and her prewar designs were popular as well.

In the 1960s, costume jewelry began to replace fine jewelry in the pages of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and the taste for bespoke pieces subsided. In 1974, at age 74, Belperron and Herz decided to close the business. After her death in 1983, a small number of discerning dealers and private clients continued to build collections of her work, Landrigan among them.

Though she never pursued publicity nor celebrity, Belperron's mark on modern jewelry is unmistakable. And its hold continues to this day. Fashion designer Carolina Herrera paired her Spring 2017 collection on the runway with Belperron jewelry, vintage and new. Red-carpet fashion often features a Belperron piece. This exhaustive, richly illustrated tome is enough to inspire any artist, collector, or fashion enthusiast to look to the past to imagine the future.

Kate Fogarty is a writer and editor based in Florida.

JEFF AND SUSAN WISE: ARTFUL COLLABORATION

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Jewelers Jeff and Susan Wise at Patina Gallery in Santa Fe

AT THE AARON FABER Gallery in New York recently, co-owner Patricia Faber examined jewelry by Jeff and Susan Wise, the Colorado-based artisans known for their bold, sculptural work in colored stones, gold, and silver. Faber, who has been showing the Wises's work since the '80s, noted that the couple is best known for their one-of-a-kind gem-cut bracelets, of which they've made hundreds over the three decades they've been married and in business.

But a variety of unique pieces on hand at Faber proved much more illustrative of the Wises' diverse output: playful sapphire, lapis, and gold hoop earrings; a kinetic spinning ring set with moonstone, white star sapphire, and black jade; a forged silver cuff featuring brookite, a rare mineral thought to have healing properties; a minimalist brooch of carved lapis; and a multistone "ladder" necklace incorporating moonstone, pearl, black jade, white coral, agate, tourmalated quartz, and a gray moiré-patterned stone poetically named psilomelane. Each piece bore multiple markings: the distinctive "2xwise" signature; hallmarks (normally 18k gold over sterling silver, a combination that keeps the often large-scale pieces light in weight); and also a code identifying the year made and the edition number. As Faber pointed out, this sort of archival information has become "increasingly important" as the field of art jewelry has entered the secondary market, i.e., sales through estates, auctions, and the like. "As we make 50 to 150 pieces a year," says Jeff, "having this number really helps with archival issues, as when someone asks about a piece we may have made decades ago." With the price of a piece ranging from the low to mid-thousands, the Wises have established a devoted following among serious collectors who value their distinctive sculptural and painterly approach to metalwork and lapidary.

Their story begins with Jeff's interest in jewelry as early as age 12. He learned basic skills from his grandfather, an accomplished metalsmith, and was a teenager in 1968 when Thomas Gentille's book, *Jewelry Step by Step*, was published, inspiring him with its images of contemporary jewelry forms. "It was amazing to me," he says. In the '70s he was living in Denver and producing all sorts of hippie-type work, from beadwork to copper roach clips. At Denver's East High School he took a "college-level" course in metalsmithing and from then on has remained pretty much self-taught, not only in metals but lapidary: Jeff hand-cuts all of the stones used in Wise designs.

Right:
Pendant/Brooch
sterling silver,
18k and 22k
gold, blue flash
spectrolite,
white coral

Below:
Desert Vessel #1 (brooch), ca. 1999
18k gold,
turquoise
3 x 2"

Susan, who grew up in the Washington, D.C. area, studied portrait painting from the age of 16 at the Virginia Art League, in Alexandria. An interest in horticulture led her to earn a B.S. in pomology (the branch of botany that studies and cultivates fruit) at Virginia State University. As an artist, she eventually abandoned portraiture for "the freedom of abstract painting," a field in which she has continued to maintain a parallel career. Jeff also makes sculpture in metal and stone; therefore both Wises bring fine-art perspectives and collaboration to the concept and design of their work. "When we met," says Jeff, "I had a thriving business going, but it had a very boho vibe, and Susan trimmed my sails." Over time, Susan learned basic metalworking skills from Jeff, admitting that, "I had a terrible time learning to saw, but loved it when it started coming together." As a painter, she cites Mark Rothko and Richard Diebenkorn among her influences, while the couple's evolution as jewelers owes a debt, she says, to classes they both took with Michael Goode, Charles Lewton Brain, and Lisa Gralnick.

The Wises have based their business on strong gallery representation, along with participation in a select number of craft shows annually. "Our favorite is the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show," says Jeff, because of the sophisticated clientele it draws. Elegant yet elemental, their work resides in four museum collections, including Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and the Renwick Gallery in Washington, D.C. "But success," says Susan, "requires that we constantly reinvent ourselves." A recent white-metal collection was designed with a younger clientele in mind. "We have tried to make lower-priced pieces," says Susan, "but it's not as much fun, and there's tons of competition on the lower price range." The Wises have, of course, found it essential to embrace the Internet, but there is no shopping cart on their website. "I don't understand how anyone can buy a piece of jewelry without holding it, which is why we are dedicated to our galleries," says Susan, although she notes, "there are not the gallery choices that there should be." The Wises agree that running a business is "all hard, especially with the shows not doing that well." But, as Susan maintains, "We both love creating and consider it a sacred part of our lives. The end result is the bonus."

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on art, craft, and design.

Furthermore: www.2xwise.com

Pierced mercury dimes on a worktable in Stacey Lee Webber's studio.

STACEY LEE WEBBER

BY SARAH ARCHER

THE MASSIVE GLOBE DYE WORKS complex in Northeastern Philadelphia smells of freshly ground coffee. Visitors are greeted by a gigantic antique scale and countless spools of thread in every imaginable hue, arranged just so. The building hums with activity as a network of small-batch entrepreneurs plan special event menus, frame artwork, and—evidently—roast coffee beans to perfection.

Two of these creative souls, the artist Stacey Lee Webber and her husband, sculptor Joe Leroux, along with a charming cat and surprisingly outgoing turtle, live here in a sunny apartment adjacent to their massive workspace, where Leroux's large, playful sculptures and Webber's delicate metalwork offer a delightful contrast in scale and spirit. Up front, a plastic deer peers from the array of materials and supplies from which Leroux's works in progress for a major art fair are taking shape, and some past projects involving geodesic domes hang from the ceiling. At the other end of the space, Webber and her assistant are at work crafting jewelry and small sculptures from U.S. coins, small screws, and other pieces of vernacular metal. The finished products are anything but ordinary: a floral wreath comprised of different colored screws adorns one wall, and tiny silhouettes of Abraham Lincoln shine from a bracelet in progress on the bench.

From "Hex Signs" series
cut American and
foreign coins
frame: 18 x 18 x 1"

Webber draws inspiration from the history and culture of manufacturing in America, and the Globe Dye Works, with its seemingly endless array of gorgeous antique machines, is an ideal place for her and Leroux to work and live. Established in 1865 in the now-gritty neighborhood of Frankford, Globe was a major manufacturer of bleaches and dyes during Philadelphia's industrial heyday, producing skeins of wool and spools of thread for use in clothing and upholstery until 2005. The rebirth of the Globe Dye Works building as a space for artists and creative small business owners is a quintessential urban tale of adaptive reuse, but it's also particularly emblematic of the ways in which Philadelphia's economy has had to pivot in an effort to emerge from its post-industrial malaise. Though not a Philadelphia native (she's from Indiana), Webber's artist's statement notes: "Through technique and design my work manipulates materials and employs forms that evoke pride in the American working class. My pieces are celebrations of American families and the blue-collar work ethic that binds the heart of the United States."

Since graduate school, Webber has been fascinated by both the tools of her metalsmithing trade, and the tools of "the trades" in general, and has used her work to explore shifting ideas about the value of labor. Working towards her MFA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with professors Lisa Gralnick and Kim Kridler, Webber experimented with metal filigree techniques

of the kind found in the developing world, where metal is expensive but labor is cheap. Filigree pieces tend to appear gaudy to a discerning eye, but their fabrication can be exquisite and inspired. In a sense, the workmanship itself is the precious item, not the metal. This project got Webber thinking about one of the most common "valuables" in the world: coins. In 2008, she created a lifesized claw hammer using pennies. From there, she embarked on a series called "Craftsmen," in which she created tools as complex as circular saws, shovels, and tape measures using pre-1982 pennies, which are nearly 100 percent copper, and pre-1964 quarters and dimes, which are 90 percent silver. These haunting pieces offer multiple perspectives on value of craftsmanship simultaneously. Is the hard work of hammering, sawing, and sanding worth mere pennies today? What of Webber's own formidable craftsmanship, evident in the carefully soldered and pierced coins? And what of that of the coins themselves, each one a tiny sculpture?

If the commentary on skilled labor is not immediately evident to everyone who encounters Webber's sculptures, people tend to understand the jewelry almost immediately. Her work can be found in the gift shops of institutions including the Museum of Arts and Design, the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, and the Fuller Craft Museum. Jewelry is the realm of the precious, and her elegant and witty use of coins elicits fascination and a lot of questions. Many people want to know whether altering U.S. currency is in fact legal, and indeed it is; it is illegal to deface currency for the purpose of counterfeiting, but no one would get very far attempting to buy a cup of coffee with one of Webber's *Abe M.I.A. Necklaces*—part of the "Abe Collection"—in which a cascade of shiny pierced pennies are linked to one another through the negative space where Abraham Lincoln's silhouette used to be. Webber's inventiveness with the humble penny also extends to the coin's historic association with luck. For her "Hex Signs" series, of which several examples are on display in the studio, she fashioned small wall pieces inspired by the hexagonal designs of Pennsylvania Dutch folk art. Lincoln profiles perch delicately on pieces of copper wire, forming radial designs reminiscent of honeycombs and snowflakes.

Webber's work has won her admirers in both the museum world and the retail realm: her work was featured in the exhibition "40 Under 40" at the Renwick Gallery in 2012, and she's also a regular at prestigious craft fairs including the American Craft Council Show, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art Craft Show. She's currently at work on a new series in which she's translating camouflage patterns into a two-dimensional work whose individual pieces are flexible. Another recent work, *Specimen: Handgun #1*, is comprised of a deactivated handgun which has been encased in Lucite and cut into thin slices, revealing the structure of the gun layer by layer as though it were undergoing a full-body scan. This piece will be featured in an exhibition called "I.M.A.G.I.N.E. Peace Now!," organized by Boris Bally in an effort to draw attention to the crisis of gun violence in America.

In her atmospheric studio and in the substance of her work, Webber is steeped in history, yet the results of her creative endeavors are original and refreshing. In this busy workspace where quarters and pennies gleam from every work surface, the preciousness is in the ideas.

Sarah Archer is a writer and independent curator based in Philadelphia.

Stacey Lee Webber at the bench in her Philadelphia studio.

WHAT I WANT

BY SUSIE GANCH

Stacey Lane
Tale Pendant and Rider, 2016
10k gold, sterling silver, pink tourmaline, green tourmaline, lab grown rubies (all recycled metal or Harmony metal from Hoover and Strong)
Photo: Mercedes Jelinek

COSTUME JEWELRY REFLECTS a season's hot trends. It's eye candy, usually with a short life before it ends up in the landfill as the trend wanes. Art jewelry challenges my expectations of what it means to adorn my body. I peer through the lens of its cultural perspective, and appreciate the constant sense of surprise I feel when looking at it (or wearing it!).

But recently I have begun to shift my attention to jewelry made from exquisitely precious materials, in an effort to find work that is timeless and begs to live on long after all of us will. If I had to pick one piece of jewelry that I would love to wear every day, that could survive the beating that time would demand, and that would continue to be desirable, which piece would it be? Of course, as a lover of jewelry, this is a hard question. Here are a few pieces that are contenders, selected from a variety of jewelry artists. Some mirror my concern for responsibly sourced materials. Some use jewelry as a political platform to draw attention to social injustice in the world; some infuse their pieces with surprising techniques and materials. All of these works are made by jewelers who are acutely aware of the history of jewelry, and use it as an anchor for their designs, while at the same time twisting tradition into pieces that become contemporary heirlooms.

Susie Ganch is an artist and associate professor in the Department of Craft and Material Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Gina Pankowski
Pink Pearl Ring,
from "Sensual Tension"
series, 1996-present
cultured pearl natural
color, recycled 18k gold
Photo: Gina Pankowski

James De Givenchy
for Fonderie 47
Ring, 2012
repurposed steel from AK47,
gold, diamonds
Photo courtesy
Fonderie 47

Ring bears the serial number of the AK47 from which the steel was wrought. Purchase enables the destruction of 120 assault rifles in Africa. To date Fonderie 47 has funded the destruction of more than 55,000 assault rifles in Africa.

James De Givenchy
for Taffin
Ring
oval diamond, red ceramic,
orange ceramic, 18k rose
gold
Photo courtesy Taffin

Helen Britton
Wood Devil, 2015
18k gold, pale pink argyle diamonds
Photo courtesy Sienna Patti Contemporary

Polly Wales
Narrow Ruby Confetti Ring, 2015
18k yellow gold, rubies, diamonds
Photo: Polly Wales Fine Jewelry

Noam Elyashiv
Two Circles (pendant), 2010
silver, 18k gold
Photo courtesy Sienna Patti Contemporary

Adam Foster
Constellation Band, 2012
silver, 18k yellow gold, diamonds
Photo: Adam Foster Jewelry

All Photos: Mirei Takeuchi

Alexander Blank's pragmatic ideas about editions are indicative of how a younger generation of jewelry artists feels free to play with standards set by former generations.

Jackal (brooches), 2012
perspex mirror, cardboard, silver
2 5/8 x 4 3/8 x 3 1/2"

Alexander Blank's Fabulous Fantasies

by Liesbeth den Besten

Bunny (pendant), 2006
antlers, 8k gold
3 3/4 x 2 3/8 x 1/2"

German artist Alexander Blank is the quintessential outsider: one who wandered into the field by accident, but after gaining an understanding of it, developed into an artist with an impressive signature. Blank's use of commercial logos, Looney Tunes characters, and smiley faces points to a healthy interest in popular culture. He began using such iconography in his jewelry at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, in the class of Otto Künzli. *The Fat Booty of Madness* catalogue, which celebrates the jewelry class at the Munich Academy (published in 2008), features a photograph of one of Blank's early jewelry pieces. Blank's colleague and friend Stefan Heuser sits on a bed half-naked, in a rather provocative pose, wearing a *Bunny* pendant cut from stag horn (2006). The pose and setting are hilarious, but at the same time the image unveils something else: an independence and stubbornness, a disinterest in the formal and communicative status quo of the field.

Blank's route to art jewelry is a happy coincidence. He says he was more interested in sports, skateboarding, and having fun than school, and had no idea about what would interest him as a profession. But when the photographer had already engaged another intern for the job Blank wanted, he chose to intern with a goldsmith next door, and enrolled in technical classes, as required in the German educational system. Though he then completed two years at the Staatliche Zeichenakademie in Hanau, and a one-year apprenticeship in Hannover, Blank explains, "I was just trying, but not really caring about jewelry." But when he started his MA studies in Hanau, he just knew "he didn't want to fail again." Subjects like branding and labeling caught his interest, but it was a lecture series that changed his mind. "There was a discussion between Karl Dau and Rudolf Bott about being a designer or an artist," says Blank. "Bott explained that being an artist was about

Tank (pendant), 2006
bed linen, silver, high density foam, plastic
length 15 3/4"

having the freedom of choice; if you want to make flowers tomorrow you could do that. That was an eye opener. I realized I didn't want to become the slave of my own brand; that there were other possibilities than having a shop and a brand." When he found out that the jewelry that interested him was made by artists who had studied in Munich, he decided to apply to the Academy of Fine Arts. In 2004 Blank started his studies there in the Klasse Künzli, the class for jewelry and hollowware.

The postgraduate educational system at the art academy in Munich cannot be compared to any other jewelry education in the world. There are no courses, and every student works on his own, though there are consults with the professor, assistants, and the other students once a week. "To be admitted you have a conversation with the professor, and to close your study you simply stop," says Blank. "I studied there for five and a half years, and finished in 2010." Most Munich students are rather advanced in age when they enter the Jewelry Class, and they have jobs in addition to their studies, so they start entering and organizing exhibitions early on. Intense friendships, relationships, and collaborations are often forged in Munich's Jewelry Class, or the "home of jewellery," as their website aptly puts it. Blank is part of a close group of former Munich Academy jewelers that includes Jiro Kamata, Kiko Gianocca, Melanie Isverding, Christian Hoedl, Florian Weichsberger, and Stefan Heuser.

"The academic way of thinking," says Blank, "where the concept is central, often led in my case to singular pieces such as *Tank*." This 2006 pendant, a plastic toy-like tank wrapped in flowered '70s bed linen, is one of his earliest pieces that bears typical Blank characteristics: a clear, recognizable, and repurposed form, and elements of popular culture. Having grown up in a provincial town with an American army base, Blank was confronted regularly with tanks, while watching American cartoons broadcast on television was a favorite pastime. In *Tank*, youth culture, memories, and social comment are merged into a piece that has an iconic quality.

Memento Juniori (Tom & Jerry)
(pendants), 2012
high density foam, silver, cotton
Tom 3 x 3 x 2 7/8"
Jerry 2 7/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 1/4"

Blank's use of commercial logos, Looney Tunes characters, and smiley faces points to a healthy interest in popular culture.

Ed's Friend (Evil Ed) (brooch), 2009
high density foam, silver, acrylic, lacquer
3 x 3 x 4"

Ed's Friend (Owl) (brooch), 2009
high density foam, silver, acrylic, lacquer
4 7/8 x 3 5/8 x 3 1/4"

Ed's Friend (Snail) (brooch), 2009
high density foam, silver, acrylic, lacquer
4 3/8 x 4 1/4 x 4 1/8"

In his early academic period, Blank explored various strategies to disarm or enforce the wearer by using a familiar commercial language, in such works as *Bunny*, *Superman*, *McD*, and *Ferrari*. These pendants (all from 2006) were made in different materials and techniques that showed an interest in cutting and carving, and conceived in a graphic two-dimensional manner. For Blank, making these pendants was vital: "The point of putting something on you, in an obvious way on top of everything else, and how it speaks to the world: these questions started interesting me," he says. The class discussions were an important way to determine if the communication he wanted to establish through his jewelry was working. "I like it when my pieces are worn; it directly reflects the wearer," says Blank. "Jewelry can make it heavier and more complex." The *Smiley* brooches (2007), translations of an emoticon in cut and folded lacquered iron, provide fun, while the transparent acrylic *Shields* brooches (2008) create unease. The latter refer to family arms as well as brands as two ways to underline your identity. But because the pieces are transparent, there is nothing to hide behind, no brand, no acquired identity; the wearer is left emptyhanded.

Blank attempted a more sculptural approach in 2010, when he started to work with high-density foam. The first character he created was a frog, whom he called Ed. Blank says, "I had the material around for some time and wanted to try it. It worked out well; Ed looked good and friendly." Blank then gave the character a protruding face, and made it black, like Darth Vader. So Ed became "Evil Ed," and a storyline developed. "For the first time I did not start with a concept but with a narrative," he says. After Ed, he made about 35 other animal characters, all one-off pieces. The series "Evil Ed and Friends" became Blank's final academy work, presented in 2011. There were ominous allusions in the way he presented them as a gathering. The cohort of harmful animals in their black disguises delivered an uneasy message that still requires decoding.

Blank does not want to be pinned down as "the guy who does the foam carving."

Jimmy (brooch), 2014
high density foam, graphite, silver, lacquer
3 1/8 x 3 1/8 x 1"

Ahoi Acapulco (brooch), 2014
jet, silver
3 5/8 x 4 x 1 1/2"

Once liberated from the dictate of the concept, Blank fashioned myriad stories from the fables of his childhood. *Memento Juniori*, *Friends Longing for Darkness*, and *Jackals* (all 2011) were exhibited together under the title "Where Did the Night Go"?[1] Blank took Looney Tunes figures like Tom, Jerry, Tweety, Daffy, Sylvester, and Speedy Gonzales, and changed their looks by hollowing them out and finishing them in a bleached color reminiscent of skulls. They seem to warn us to commemorate our youth, like a 21st-century counterpart of 19th-century memento mori jewelry. The white sculptural rings of *Friends Longing for Darkness*, recalling "Evil Ed and Friends," were presented in a circle on a round table, together with *Ed's Bell*, an imposing clock (with Ed's head as a clapper) hanging in the center above the group. Three *Jackals* (2011), made from mirrored Plexiglas, were mounted as shady guardians on the wall. This exhibition showed Blank's unequivocal talent at mingling different storylines, with the jewelry acting as stills from a movie yet to be released.

With the "Jimmys," a group of more than 30 carved brooches made in 2013, Blank created a mysterious world of faceless portraits cut out of foam and treated with graphite. Their outlines recall celebrities, like rock stars, actors, and sportsmen, conceived in a manga style, while their flat, erased faces are individualized only by a protruding eye(s), mouth, or nose. They are anonymous portraits, composed in classical jewelry shapes.

Blank doesn't want to be pinned down as "the guy that does the foam carving," and he has also become increasingly interested in the symbolic value of certain materials. That's why his "Ahoi Acapulco" (2014) series of brooches, mourning the dark side of holiday paradises, features

Left:
Dear Heartbeat (brooch), 2015
silicone, silver
2 x 1 3/8"

Bottom:
Backflips & Summersaults (pendants), 2016
jet, string
3 1/2 x 2 1/8 x 3/8"

Blank's latest jewelry pieces are maybe the most personal pieces he has made so far.

waving palm trees carved in bogwood, a well-known material for 19th-century mourning jewelry. Also the "Florida" brooches (2015), which were cut in two layers of black Perspex just like a contemporary cameo, show an awareness of jewelry history. Together with the "Florida" series, Blank presented his "Dear Heartbeat" brooches at Galerie Rob Koudijs in Amsterdam. These geometrical brooches constituted an amazing body of work, imitating the human skin down to the smallest detail, including spots, hairs and veins, but formed in nonhuman, industrial shapes. Blank tried to make the skin for more than a year, but eventually he had a film prop company execute the work for him. This collection of shocking jewelry pieces caused a dispute with a fine artist from Munich, who accused him of copying his sculptures. They found a solution that took the sting out of the conflict, but it was not without its pain.

Blank's latest jewelry pieces, exhibited in February 2016 during the Munich Jewellery Week, are maybe the most personal pieces he has made so far.[2] Blank says, "The last year was very bumpy, in my personal and artistic life, but with good perspectives as well." These experiences are reflected in the pendants *Backflips & Summersaults* (2015/16). These black pendants, made in jet, a typical mourning jewelry material, only reveal their depth when taken in the hand: on the backside, scar-like cuts are revealed. The identical shapes in white have a completely different feel and appeal. They are cut from high-density foam, and the colors and patterns on the rear side reflect the heat patterns derived from a body scan. The *Backflips & Summersaults* reads as the narrative of a life, and as a catharsis, which is at its strongest in the ten *Skipped Heartbeat* objects, exhibited at the same occasion. These pieces revisit the *Dear Heartbeat* brooches: smaller, without pin, without skin, and cut in black jet.

Blank is part of a younger generation of jewelry artists that feels free to play with standards that were set by former generations. He lets each piece's characteristics determine whether it is a one-off, or a limited edition, and if so, how many to produce. *Evil Ed and Friends* and the *Jimmys* were made as one-offs. Each of the *Memento Mori* is produced in an edition of three. The first *Smileys* (2007) were made in an edition of seven, though he continues offering a later version (with smaller dimensions), in an edition size that is yet to be determined. Of these choices, says Blank: 'It's open, and every time different…I need to be able to supply shows, and I like to have a good amount of pieces in stock. The "Memento" series might be extended with two other characters. If I need them for an exhibition, I know exactly which ones I will make."

Whether a piece is a one-off or a limited edition has nothing to do with attempting to make a living from jewelry, Blank explains. "That doesn't really interest me. The reason to make an edition is incited by the nature of the piece. Because I have a job [like many former Klasse Künzli students, Blank does production work for a commercial jewelry company in Munich, and also teaches at the Art Academy in Nürnberg], I can make whatever I want. I normally work on my own, without interns, because the work needs me so far to do it." Although a part-time artist by necessity, it offers Blank freedom from the market—and space to allow dreams and fantasies to grow into new fables, and characters that will land on Blank Planet.[3] ◆

Amsterdam-based Liesbeth den Besten is an independent art historian, writer, curator, and teacher.

Backflips & Summersaults (front and back of brooch), 2016
high density foam, silver, paint
3 1/2 x 2 1/8 x 3/8"

Skipped Heartbeat (objects), 2016
jet
between 2 x 2 x 1 1/8" and 1 3/4 x 1 3/4 x 2"

1. Galerie Rob Koudijs, Amsterdam, October 22–December 3, 2011. / **2.** Group exhibition *Everyday Epics*, Kunstpavillon, Munchen, February 25–28, 2016. / **3.** *Blank Planet* was the title of Alexander Blank's first American exhibition at Gallery Ornamentum in Hudson, 2013.

AMERICAN VICTORIAN: LOLA BROOKS

By default or by design, Brooks mirrors aspects of Queen Victoria's reign, during which contradictions abounded: the culture of death, a certain romanticism, a passion for collecting, and appreciation for the meaning of objects.

by Marjorie Simon

BORN IN 1969, the year of Woodstock and a century after the death of Prince Albert, Lola Brooks is a child of the 1980s with a passion for the Victorian age. An American original with a frank decorative impulse, Brooks creates singular objects out of multitudes: hearts, flowers, gemstones, miles of chain. A fearless materialist and problem-solver, she repeatedly confronts the uncomfortable nexus of death and Eros. Her work is richly layered, grabbing attention with familiar, even clichéd forms, and yielding up hidden narratives upon closer inspection. She craves the constant push and pull of darkness and beauty, what she calls "the complicated space of human culture."

By default or by design, Brooks mirrors aspects of Queen Victoria's reign, during which contradictions abounded: the culture of death, a certain romanticism, a passion for collecting, and appreciation for the meaning of objects. A tone of straitlaced sexual morality coexisted with a body of now-classic works of erotic literature. Forgoing traditional jewelry through her decades of mourning, the Queen spawned an industry of mourning jewelry in black gems and steel, eventually allowing half-mourning and the introduction of dark red garnets. Brooks welcomes it all: the extreme, the sublime, the paradoxes, the edge of human experience in emotion and physicality, Her "sleeve" tattoos, outsize eyeglasses, and vintage fashions not only recall the excesses of past decades, but seem to both celebrate and parody them at the same time.

For a time Brooks was best known for oversized hearts and bows of miraculous construction: labyrinthine, transparent, woven in layers of fine wire, layered with ultra-feminine pink pearls or vintage carved ivory roses. Bristling with movable gems or studded with bezeled ones, they

twointhehand, 2015
male and female quail heads
and wings, walnut, stainless
steel chain, champagne
diamonds, sterling silver
14k gold
4 1/2 x 5 1/2 x 2"

BROOKS SEEMS ALWAYS TO WANT MORE, MORE: MORE GEMS, MORE MOVEMENT, MORE GOLD, MORE WEIGHT.

atehearts (a self-portrait), modeled by the artist

boundheart, 2013
stealedheart, 2012
pteromerhanophobia, 2012
bloodgarnetheart, 2009
bubblegumheart, 2009
ruffledheart, 2013
279forgetmeknots, 2012
bleedingheart, 2009
stainless steel, 18k gold, 14k gold, mixed media

The artist's personal collection of rhinestone eyewear from the 1950s, '60s & '70s

were reminiscent, perhaps, of her own capacious heart. Later, yards of stainless steel chain made rigid with gold solder became ribbons, bows, and neckties, many with poignant, sexually suggestive allusions. Her newest work, not widely published before now, has become more layered and darker, both more personal and more political. It belongs to the genre of *memento mori* at the interface of beauty, luxury, greed, exploitation, and ultimately, death.

As a young star, Brooks and her persona were well documented in print and online. The artist's famous collections—eyeglasses, wallets, gemstones, animal prints, among many others—reflect her partnership with desire. With a collection (of treasured objects) one is never alone. Brooks well understands the nature of her desire, and admits that, with multiples, the loss of one isn't noticeable. In a way, she seeks to evoke that desire in others through her work, trading on lust and seducing the eye by setting quivering elements on tiny springs (*en tremblant*).

Brooks is self-aware, relentlessly questioning, ready to search out and, evidently, discover the extremes of human endeavor, in personal relationships and at the bench. She seems always to want more, more: more gems, more movement, more gold, more weight; how far to the edge can I go? Too much is never enough. It seems obvious to say she invites exaggeration, and is unafraid of excess. "If I like something, I fall in love with it," she says. The brooch must be bigger and bigger, larded with vintage carved roses en tremblant, until once, having packed them into a volumetric, voluptuous confection, she famously declared she had made "J.Lo's ass."

Brooks grew up in suburban Connecticut, a place reputedly short on eccentricity. A dexterous child with a beloved dollhouse, she created fashions and jewelry for her dolls. She was a voracious reader, the evidence of which can be seen in the titles and references of each body of work. When she discovered the existence of the Salvation Army thrift store, she used the earnings from her paper route to build a distinctive wardrobe of vintage clothing, with which she crafted an idiosyncratic adolescent persona.

An early talent for mechanical drawing coupled with her sewing skills led Brooks to consider patternmaking for fashion design as a possible career. Fashion seemed practical: she was good at it, people always needed clothing, and New York was the fashion hub of the country. She began at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, but, after discovering jewelrymaking, wound up at SUNY/New Paltz, where she arrived for her interview on the back of a motorcycle.

Eager to be in school, and comfortable with risk-taking, Brooks came well equipped with good hand skills and sophisticated ideas. Cerebral and playful, she had an "aggressive appeal" her teachers found exciting. Her exterior flash belied a strong work ethic and a hunger to make serious work. Thriving on the honest critical dialogue of a young Myra Mimlitsch-Gray, she showed a mature approach to ideas that stimulated others in the program. Brooks distinguished herself as a student by her keen problem solving and fabrication, and was bolstered by the lofty expectations of faculty who saw her as smart, restless, committed, and indefatigable.

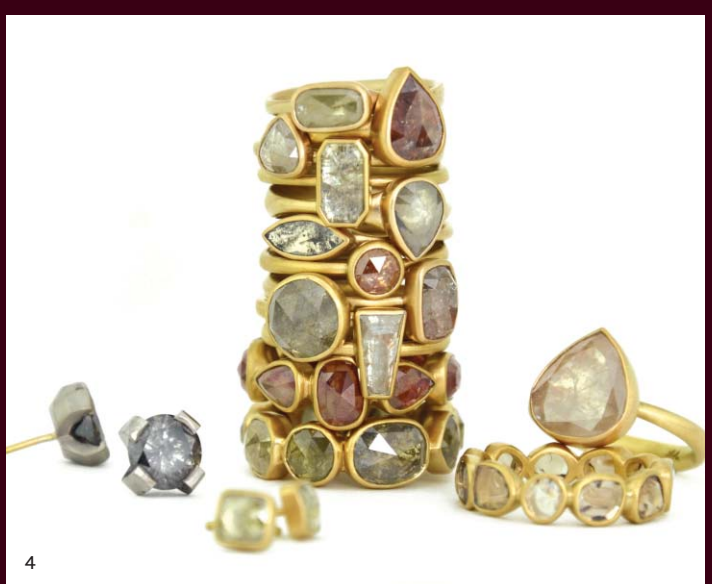
Brooks credits the rigor of the New Paltz program with introducing her to critical thinking about the meaning of jewelry and objects. A good example of student influences might be *Death in the Dining Room*, Kenneth Ames's obscure sociological study of Victorian domestic material culture, which gave her a context for collecting and objects. From Ames's observations came her *Chatelaine*, a tour de force of object-making that shows Brooks's predilection for fabricating complex forms and mechanisms, as well as her work ethic to have completed a project to such a degree of refinement. *Chatelaine* was her stellar final project, revealing the ripening of her thinking and her critical engagement. Layered and compelling, it marked a turning point in her development. Empowered with a woman's armor, she went out into the world.

Brooks spent the next two decades at her bench and others', rewarded for her diligence by working for her former New Paltz professor Jamie Bennett and nearby goldsmith Gabriella Kiss. She taught workshops and spent nearly a decade at

1

2

3



4

1
chatelaine, 1996
steel, sterling silver, velvet, sawdust, dressmaker's straight pins
3 x 5 x 1 1/2"

2
discoball, 2003
champagne rose cut diamonds, stainless steel, 18k gold
1 1/4 x 1 1/4 x 50"

3
garnetclump (brooch), 2003
stainless steel, 18k, vintage rose cut garnets
2 x 2 x 1 1/2"

4
tower of diamonds (rings), 2013
18k gold, diamonds

rosewreath (brooch), 2009
en tremblant, vintage ivory roses, stainless steel, 18k gold, champagne rose cut diamonds, springs
4 1/4 x 4 1/4 x 2"

SHE TOOK TRITE AND SENTIMENTAL THEMES OF MAINSTREAM JEWELRY AND WRESTED THEM FROM CLICHÉ.

the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, as a master lecturer under the leadership of Sharon Church. From Church she discovered her talent for and love of teaching. At each step Brooks encountered makers and thinkers at the top of her field, who welcomed her and challenged her, all the while making and exhibiting her own evolving work.

By 2008 Brooks's work had become personal in narrative. She took trite and sentimental themes of mainstream jewelry—hearts, flowers, the color pink, gemstones—and wrested them from cliché in a post-modern turnabout. Eschewing assemblage of found objects, and committed to the highest level of craftsmanship, she used the symbols of feminine vulnerability to make powerful and impenetrable work. She began to brazenly load heavy steel chain with gold solder, making pieces that appear nearly unwearable in their scale and weight. However, the many photographs of Brooks wearing her work attest to her jeweler's concern for wearability. One can see the influence of Mimlitsch-Gray's explorations with scale in the gonzo fabrication. Constructing a large heart from soldered chain, then cutting through to place a working lock mechanism within, also recalls the early mechanisms of Lisa Gralnick. Each series seems to build on its predecessors; hearts or bows led to hearts *and* bows *and* gemstones.

Brooks's love of materials leads her to consider the history and cultural ramifications of every process and design. She loves gems. Her edition work has the austere classicism of simple settings that highlight the intrinsic beauty and pictorial narrative of the gem itself, God's pictures. She acknowledges the contradictions implicit in using precious stones, calling them "signifiers of the human condition," in reference to the heavy human price of mining.

What could be more fraught than using diamonds? Brooks is not alone in her love for old-fashioned round rose-cut diamonds. Dating from 1500, but especially popular in the Victorian era, these flat-bottomed gems were valued for the warmth of their sparks, not the flash of fire of the newer brilliant cut. She sources hoards of vintage gems, and makes friends with the seller, who is happy for this young person to take such obvious interest. A garnet hoard of some 4,000 carats came into her possession, enabling her to use them wantonly to festoon bracelets and earrings, fill openworked heart brooches with their blood-red brilliance, and build bulbous brooches as if they were fast-growing tumors of steel and gold.

"atehearts," eight brooches created between 2009 and 2013, characteristically conflate high and low, as gold is paired with steel, and rigid structure with vulnerable or moveable parts. Using herself as a model, as if to reassure those who fear its size, Brooks has created a work that rests easily against a background of inked tattoos with Gothic themes. The artist's hand in her photos reminds us to consider the origin as well as the destination of this work. Poised between the decorative arts and the functional crafts, contemporary jewelry takes the human body as its stage and performance as its mission. Juxtaposing her ornamented body with her fully dimensional objects, Brooks embodies jewelry at its most performative.

Brooks's newest work is, unsurprisingly, both amalgam and culmination of prior motifs. Beginning with fairy tales, she takes on their primal themes: good and evil, death in life, the fragility of human lives, and the many dangers alluded to in folk tales and myths. Titles contain phrases that may have entered the American vernacular, but whose origins are likely forgotten. She calls up English nursery rhymes, again tapping into a longing for a time she never experienced. The objects, however, have everything to do with childhood memories of hearing or reading the old-fashioned rhymes. The often brutal or sexual content of the tales is masked by the pleasing rhymes and bucolic settings. She uses the psychologically layered narrative to reveal (and conceal) her own personal and political content.

Brooks's ability to tolerate, or even invite, contradiction, is nowhere more evident than in her "exploitation" of the animal world in her use of red coral, ivory, and taxidermy. The pictorial record from the 17th and 18th centuries teems

byebabybunting, 2015
(front and back of brooch)
vintage child's rabbit fur
muff, stainless steel,
14k gold solder, diamonds,
hand-carved baby elephant
skeleton with 14k gold tusks
5 x 5 x 2"

SEVERAL LAYERS OF CRUELTY AND COMFORT ARE PACKED INTO A SINGLE WORK.

with dead animals, tables strewn with carcasses of game animals and birds, symbolizing death in the midst of life. In the 1990s Robert Ebendorf interpreted personal losses with road-kill squirrel paws and crab claws. Brooks riffs on her knowledge of art history and mythology, trusting that her audience will follow her. The weight of historical reference adds to the depth of meaning in each object. The moral lessons of past centuries remain encoded in Brooks's newest work, which uses animals in many forms, including pre-ban ivory, coral, butterfly wings, fur, and actual animals, such as a pair of quail. Ivory and red coral are also transgressive and controversial. However, craft-based skills such as taxidermy are enjoying a resurgence since New Zealander Julia DeVille and the Dutch team operating as Idiots (Afke Goldsteijn and Floris Bakker) brought them into contemporary jewelry within the past decade.

byebabybunting takes one of a child's earliest lullabies and spotlights the theme of violence by reminding us that the safety and comfort of a vulnerable babe is dependent on the death of another vulnerable creature.[1] Once more, she acknowledges the price paid for human desire, privileging the life of a child over that of a furry bunny. Brooks considers this new work one of her most political. Using a vintage rabbit fur muff, a popular accessory for women and girls from the 16th to the 19th centuries, and a gift of pre-ban ivory, Brooks combines "both the

violence and nurturing I find in the nursery rhyme itself." This paradox is captured in the reverse view of *byebabybunting*, with the added shock of the ivory skeleton secreted within. Thus several layers of cruelty and comfort are packed into a single work.[2] Curiously, the phrase "byebabybunting" is largely unknown today by members of Brooks's generation, and certainly by succeeding ones. So, what is hidden, and what revealed?

In the past, many children's tales such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* contained veiled political references or satires, which would have been recognized by readers at the time. The opening of the following classic rhyme also has likely been forgotten.

Sing a song of sixpence
A pocket full of rye
Four and twenty blackbirds
Baked in a pie.[3]

Constructed in signature Brooks fashion, from chains soldered into rigid strips like a heart-shaped cage or lattice top pie, *fourandtwenty* connects her newest work with its predecessors. At once light and dense, heavy and weightless, the intricately made feathers both float from "gossamer stainless steel chain," and accumulate in a pile at the bottom. In her oblique way, Brooks reassures herself and us of the promise of the blackbird's flight to freedom, snatched from the hungry teeth of humans.

twointhehand (2015) is also dark and even more personal. This pair of quail is "caught" in a net, yet turned toward each other in repose. The brooch contains elements of loss and beauty, sex and death, and the paradoxes of love. Birds can fly away, but are also noted for their pair bonding, if not, we now know, their monogamy. Contained in the net that slithers down nearly a foot are parts of relationships: the scary intimacy, the elastic bonds of freedom, and the attempt to hold on to one another and oneself at the same time. Using the dead animals to portray another aspect of love keeps the "lovebirds" from being trite and, in Brooks's opinion, commands a level of commitment from her audience. Brooks provokes the viewer to "confront beauty, sentimentality, death, and loss differently." Whether you feel desire or revulsion, you are compelled to look.

fearofflying, with its captured butterfly wings, is Brooks's commemorative portrait of her mother. The layers of chains in the cage of this large brooch do not really "capture" the trembling, multi-hued butterflies. The specific narrative may be missing, but the universal message is that we make our own cages, and what keeps us from soaring may be only the flimsiest of boundaries.

Some contemporary theorists have talked about using jewelry as a lens through which to "see" or reflect contemporary culture. Lola Brooks's jewelry uses the familiar iconography of the Victorian period to interpret dangers of childhood and relational contradictions in tangible objects held close to the body. For the most part, Brooks is inner-directed, not especially conversant in the field at large, nor eager to learn. In the end her work seems unapologetically, resolutely American. ◆

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer based in Philadelphia.

Left:
fourandtwenty, 2015
stainless steel chain, stainless steel, 14k gold solder, champagne rose cut diamonds
4 1/2 x 5 x 2 1/4"

Right:
pteromerhanophobia (fearofflying), 2012
stainless steel chain, 14k gold solder, butterfly wings, hand-cut watch crystals
4 x 4 1/2 x 2"

1. This 18th-century lullaby (variously published as "Cry Baby Bunting"), has the lyrics of "Bye, baby Bunting/ Daddy's gone a-hunting,/ Gone to get a rabbit skin/ To wrap the baby Bunting in." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bye,_baby_Bunting. / **2.** Brooks donated "a significant chunk" of the money received from the sale price of the piece to the Elephant Crisis Fund. / **3.** "Sing a song of sixpence". *My Book House. In the Nursery*. Vol. 1, p. 49., ed by Olive Beaupre Miller. *The Book House for Children*, Chicago, 1937, "... well-known in England in the 16th Century." Blackbirds were actually eaten in Tudor times. One can imagine the revenge of the Blackbirds when they fly out of the King's pie unharmed, and make off with the maid's nose, signaling the vulnerability of the servant class.

RETHINKING TRADITION

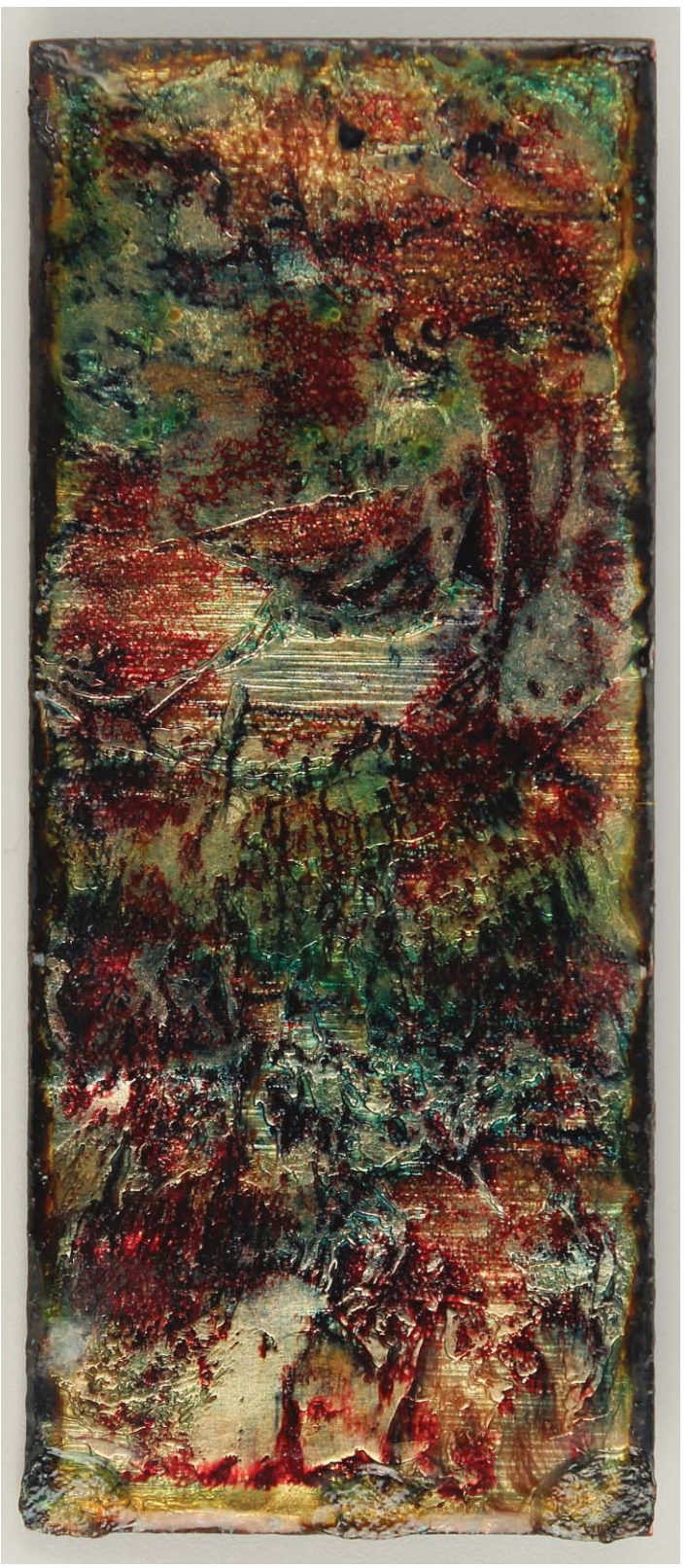
JUNE SCHWARCZ AND LATE 20TH-CENTURY AMERICAN ENAMELING

by Bernard N. Jazzar and Harold B. Nelson

Lillian Elliott (#833), 1981
electroplated copper foil, enamel
6 7/8 x 7 7/8 x 5 1/4"
Collection of Forrest L. Merrill
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

Unless otherwise noted, all works are by June Schwarcz
and are in the collection of the Enamel Arts Foundation.
All photos: Bernard Jazzar, unless otherwise noted.

Untitled, ca. 1957
etched copper, enamel
7 1/2 x 3 1/8"



Untitled, ca. 1957
etching on paper
7 1/4 x 3"

JUNE SCHWARCZ (1918–2015) was among the most innovative artists working in the field of enamels in the late 20th century. Best known for her electroplated metal sculpture embellished with rich enamel color, she produced an extensive body of work which, while referring to vessel making traditions, defied convention because, as she wryly noted, "They simply don't hold water."

For more than 60 years Schwarcz created inventive forms in glass and metal that set new standards for the field, while serving as a mentor and an inspiration to generations of young and emerging artists. She was included in 1956 in "Craftsmanship in a Changing World," the inaugural exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in New York (now the Museum of Arts and Design), only two years after she had begun to work in enamel.[1] She was also featured in that museum's 1959 exhibition "Enamels" and the traveling exhibition "Objects: U.S.A." in 1969.[2]

Amassing a series of honors and awards throughout her life, she was designated a California Living Treasure in 1985, and in 2009 she was given the Masters of the Medium Award by the James Renwick Alliance of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Schwarcz was also a founding member of the Northern California Enamels Guild and a member of the Enamelist Society, where in 1991 she was given a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Born in Denver, Colorado, in 1918, June Theresa Morris studied industrial design at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn from 1939 to 1941.[3] After working in the New York fashion and design industries for several years, she married Leroy Schwarcz, a mechanical engineer, in 1943. She moved several times with her husband and two children before purchasing a home in Sausalito, California, in 1954.[4] Schwarcz was introduced to enameling that same year, and was immediately drawn to the medium's brilliant color and rich, expressive potential.[5] "I felt there were characteristics of enamel one could use that were not available in any other medium, and that's what interested me, because I didn't want to do what everyone else had done," she said.[6]

In many of her earliest pieces, especially those made between 1954 and 1962, Schwarcz used a traditional basse-taille enameling technique, cutting and etching into the surface of copper plates, plaques, and bowls to create complex, abstract compositions visible through layer upon layer of transparent enamel.[7] However, as with everything she produced, Schwarcz's work in basse-taille was idiosyncratic, improvisatory, and highly experimental.

She had first been introduced to etching in a chemistry class in high school. This experience, using an acid bath to cut into the surface of a copper etching plate, would have a lasting impact on her work in basse-taille. As she later stated: "When I (later) began enameling, I was a little frustrated with the clumsiness of working with grains of glass, as I've always liked a graphic, linear quality in things. I began etching the copper metal at home.... I (then) put black enamel in the recessed areas of the etching. So I really did basse-taille, but I didn't realize it (at the time)."[8]

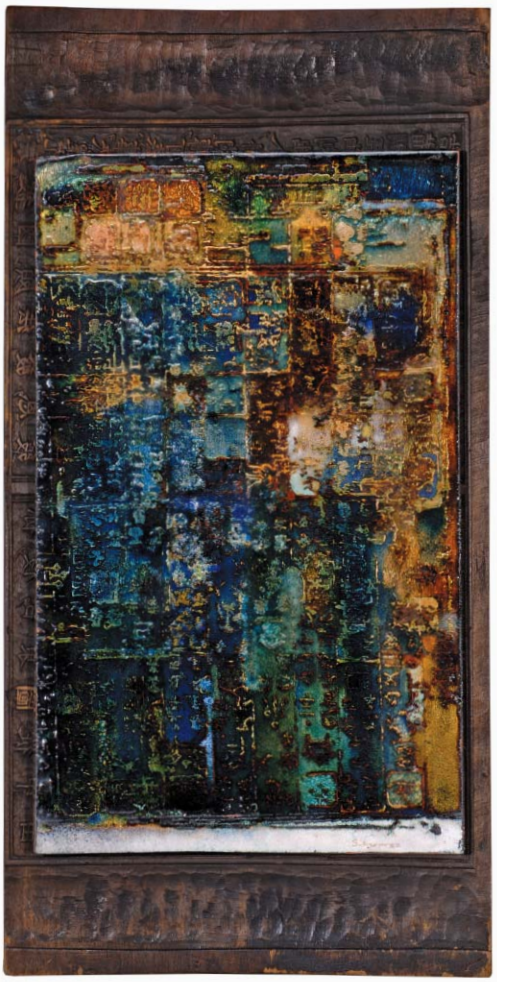
While living in Southern California in the mid-1950s, she had access to studio facilities at the La Jolla Art Center (now the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art), and immersed herself in printmaking techniques as she explored numerous ways of cutting into, etching, and engraving the copper plate. However, as she described to an interviewer in 1957, Schwarcz was more interested in the sculptural nature of the plate rather than in the appearance of the final print. "The etcher who makes prints is concerned with the quality of line, but I am concerned with the characteristic of the plate itself," she maintained.[9]

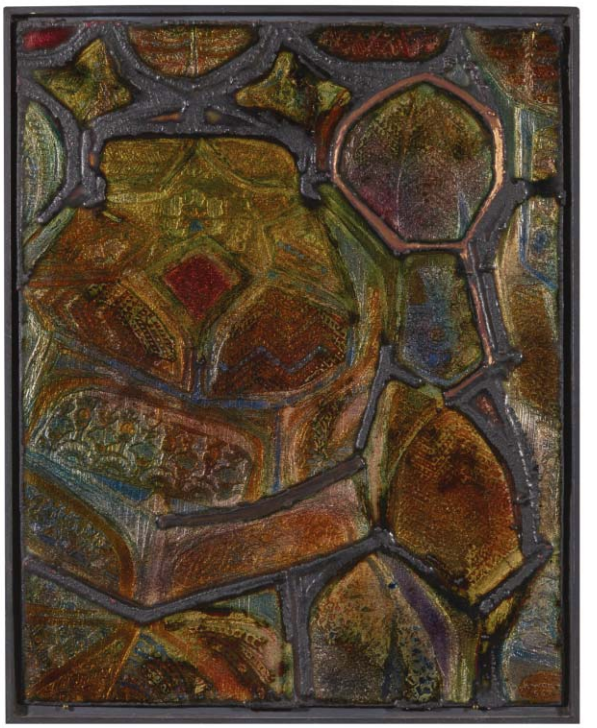
Notably, at this point in her career when she was simultaneously investigating both printmaking and enameling processes, she often pulled prints from her etched plates prior to enameling them. She then applied layers of transparent color to these same plates, creating complex abstractions in glass and metal. In 1957, the fruitful relationship between her enameling and printmaking interests was acknowledged and celebrated in her first one-person exhibition at the La Jolla Art Center.

Many of her earliest enamel plaques and bowls, produced in the mid-to-late 1950s, were inspired by nature. Among the subjects she explored in these highly abstract compositions are cobwebs, birds, trees, and built structures in the process of decay. "I was greatly influenced by nature," she stated in a later interview. "I felt there was compatibility between the action of the acid and the erosion of the elements."[10] Throughout her life, Schwarcz would continue to seek a resonant correspondence between her subject and her innovative approach to materials.

Fugue in Japanese I (#347), made in 1961, is a prime example of Schwarcz's work in basse-taille. She was a great admirer and collector of Asian, African, and Oceanic art, and in several early pieces including *Fugue in Japanese I* she used a Japanese printing board to alter the copper plate, transferring a cacophony of complex signs and symbols onto the metal. Schwarcz described making this piece to her friend and colleague Arline Fisch: "Cost-Plus had some carved wooden boards from Japan that were used to print old books. And so I printed the calligraphy

FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS SCHWARCZ CREATED INVENTIVE FORMS IN GLASS AND METAL THAT SET NEW STANDARDS FOR THE FIELD.





Right:
Fugue in Japanese I (#347), 1961
etched copper and enamel, mounted in a wood panel
16 5/8 x 8 1/4 x 1 1/4" (overall)
Collection of Oakland Museum of California
Photo: eye-magic

Far right:
Central Asia II (#567), 1970
etched and electroplated copper, enamel
11 5/8 x 10 1/8"

Opposite page:
Bowl (#508), 1967
electroplated copper, enamel
4 x 9 3/4 x 9 3/4"
Collection of Wichita Center for the Arts, Kansas
Photo: eye-magic

on the copper in a very indirect manner because the copper was rigid and the board was rigid and I couldn't print it directly. So I rolled asphalt varnish on the calligraphy board and then I rolled tracing paper onto that. And then I rolled the paper onto the copper, and what resulted was a rather confused image. I then played games with the image as if I were making an abstract painting, painting it all in asphalt varnish. And then I etched and enameled it and mounted it on one of the calligraphy boards... I did a few of them because I just wanted shifting calligraphy."[11] In her finished work, the evocative abstractions—"shifting calligraphy"—are captured within multiple layers of luminous color. *Fugue in Japanese I* was included in the 1961 "California Craftsman Exhibition" at the Oakland Art Museum (known today as the Oakland Museum of California), where it won the coveted purchase award.

Around 1962, as she became increasingly interested in building up her vessels to create deeper recesses and more varied sculptural surfaces, Schwarcz began to explore electroplating. Her husband, who was working at the time at Stanford University on its linear accelerator project, built her a 30-gallon plating tank and asked James Pope, head of the plating department, to teach her the process. Having received a few basic instructions, she began to experiment. After etching the surface of her plaques and vessels, she coated the etched areas with an asphalt varnish (a masking agent). She then submerged the piece in the plating tank, and, over time, the areas of exposed metal were built up. If she wanted a light buildup, the piece was left in the tank for a few hours. To create a more heavily sculptural surface, it could be left there for up to five days. She often repeated the process, covering built-up areas of the vessel with the asphalt varnish and re-submerging it. Once she had achieved the desired effect, Schwarcz cleaned the piece and applied enamel color.

Schwarcz's *Bowl* (#508), made in 1967, exemplifies this process. For this work she used a spun copper bowl, hammering it to slightly alter its shape. She then covered both the interior and exterior surfaces with asphalt varnish and, using a sharp, pointed tool, engraved irregular, undulating lines into the varnish on the exterior and down the rim of the interior. Once immersed in the plating tank, the areas of exposed copper became heavily built up and the areas masked by the asphalt varnish maintained their original surface. Applying blue and gold enamel across the interior surface and in the recesses on the exterior, Schwarcz created a powerful contrast between the raw exterior of the bowl and its lusciously glazed interior. This important piece was featured in the "Decorative Arts and Ceramics Exhibition" at the Wichita Art Association in 1968 where it was awarded a purchase prize.

As she became more deeply engaged in the electroplating process, Schwarcz's

interest in basse-taille diminished. However, in several rare pieces including *Central Asia II* (#567), made in 1970, she combined both techniques. Schwarcz etched the copper surface with motifs inspired by a ceiling design she had seen in a book. While most were abstract and geometric, several included floral elements. She then covered the areas she wanted to preserve with asphalt varnish and submerged the panel in the electroplating bath. The areas of exposed metal were built up to resemble the protruding coffers in a ceiling. She then used a warm palette of transparent enamels with some touches of blues and greens to create a highly sophisticated abstract composition.

As early as 1957, Schwarcz had expressed interest in "going into three dimensional enamels."[12] As she later stated: "I think by nature I'm probably more of a sculptor than a painter, although I often try to combine both in my work."[13] However, Schwarcz found her own way of making sculptural forms in glass and metal that were fundamentally unlike anything that had come before.

Around 1962, Schwarcz began to take the basse-taille technique to new levels of inventiveness using the electroplating process to build deeper recesses as well as higher ridges to enclose her luminously enameled surfaces. At the same time she began to create idiosyncratic, sculptural objects in glass and metal. Schwarcz had never considered herself a skilled metalsmith and had little patience for mastering the methods of creating a vessel. However, she wished to create unique copper vessels that could be enameled. Her exceptional design skills, her facility with pattern-making and sewing, her nascent knowledge of plating, and especially her limitless imagination combined to meet the challenges of this new body of

"I THINK BY NATURE I'M PROBABLY MORE OF A SCULPTOR THAN A PAINTER."

Above:
Vessel (#2360), 2008
electroplated copper foil, enamel, patinated
10 x 6 1/4 x 4 7/8"
Photo: Jairo Ramirez

Left:
Adam's Pants #3 (#2197), 2002
electroplated copper foil, enamel
12 1/2 x 13 x 8"
Collection of Kim Schwarcz
Photo: M. Lee Fatherree

work. She started by creating patterns or templates in paper, much like the ones a tailor uses when constructing a suit or dress. As she described: "It's much easier working with paper because you can scotch-tape pieces on.... Once I've developed several shapes, I roll out a thin copper foil on the dining room table and I cut shapes from the pattern. Then I sew them together with very thin copper wire. Depending on the shape, if it's gathered the copper is stiff enough to make it hold its shape in the bath. But if it's a more smooth surface, I put wax inside before I sew it together so it'll hold its shape as I sew on the bottom."[14] She then immersed the still-malleable copper form in the plating bath for several days until it was substantial enough to stand on its own. It was then cleaned, enameled, and fired.

Over time Schwarcz's vessels evolved into pure sculpture, defying their utilitarian foundations and all notions of containment. In 1981 Schwarcz made a piece she called *Lillian Elliott* (#833), a tribute to her friend and colleague, the inventive and highly influential Bay Area fiber artist. A freestanding open sculpture, it offers only an oblique reference to a vessel at its lip. Its expansive base comprises numerous strands (or ribbons) of enameled metal and is reminiscent of the complex fiber baskets for which Elliott was so well known.

Schwarcz's work was also, upon occasion, witty or whimsical. The artist's wry sense of humor—as well as her abiding love for her only grandchild Adam—informs *Adam's Pants #3* (#2197) of 2002. Schwarcz found inspiration for this piece in her young grandson's bell-bottom jeans, which generated a series of four vessels. The trousers' wide-flaring cuffs are echoed in the piece's expansive lower half, and the brilliant enamel color augments the playfulness of the composition.

Schwarcz's use of color varied throughout her work. She stated: "The color in part depends on the personality I want to give each piece... like some pieces somber and subtle, and some more bright."[15] And regarding abstraction and the self-sufficiency of beauty, she added: "My desire is to make things that are beautiful. There is a great trend now in this country for a work to have meaning—meaning you can describe in words. I think that if something is beautiful, that is meaning enough, whether (or not) you can say it in words."[16]

In the early 1990s, Schwarcz began to employ various methods of finishing the metal including patination and sandblasting to create a potent contrast with the brilliant color and smooth glassy surface of the enamel. This dialogue between the raw and the refined was fundamental to her aesthetic. In *Vessel* (#2360) of 2008 the artist created a quiet kind of poetry, juxtaposing readable, hard-edged areas of patinated copper next to subdued enamel shapes along with numerous subtle surface details.

Schwarcz said of enameling's appeal: "I can never completely predict how the acid or heat will behave.... The materials have ways of their own. I feel as if I'm working with living things and that makes it all quietly exciting."[18]

Many contemporary enamelists have found inspiration in Schwarcz's work and in her dedication to technical exploration. William Harper, a leading figure today, first encountered Schwarcz's work in 1966 at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. A student of Kenneth Bates, the so-called "Dean of American Enamelists" at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Harper found Schwarcz's nontraditional approach a revelation. As he later stated: "That day changed my life forever.... Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* made me shiver and cry and so did June's vessels and panels."[19] After passing through a brief period in which he produced a "faux-Schwarcz series... of electroformed and enameled bowls and chalices,"[20] Harper discovered his own artistic voice, as exemplified in his 1984 *Labyrinth*. Endowing his pieces with rich narrative content, often of an autobiographical nature, Harper formulated a new and influential direction for contemporary jewelry.

"I FEEL AS IF I'M WORKING WITH LIVING THINGS AND THAT MAKES IT ALL QUIETLY EXCITING."

Her love of abstract painting by artists such as Mark Rothko, Robert Motherwell, and Ad Reinhardt informs the powerful body of work she produced at this time.

Between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, several of her friends and colleagues wrote instructional books on enameling in response to the ever-increasing interest in the field, and they often featured Schwarcz's work. In 1957, her work was reproduced in *Enameling on Metal*, a watershed publication by the artist Oppi Untracht, to illustrate the basse-taille process and, more generally, to promote experimental approaches to traditional techniques. Schwarcz's work was also featured in numerous "how-to" publications, and was described by Fred Uhl Ball (whose enduringly popular *Experimental Techniques in Enameling* was published in 1972) in an article for *Ceramics Monthly* as a "one-woman revolutionary" and an "established pioneer in her field."[17] In an early interview,

Jamie Bennett first saw Schwarcz's work in the early 1970s when he was a graduate student at SUNY New Paltz. He was immediately drawn to its raw energy and powerful sculptural presence. Trained in the classical traditions of enameling and working, at the time, in cloisonné, Bennett was impressed with Schwarcz's irreverence. "She represented a perspective outside the narrow confines of enameling, outside 'the academy,'" he says. "She truly lifted the veil for me."[21] Bennett's later interest

in a more sculptural approach to form as well as his fascination with juxtaposing raw and refined elements in his work owe a considerable debt to her influence. These layered concerns are apparent in a brooch he produced in 1988 titled *Priori #9*, part of a groundbreaking series in which Bennett used the electroforming process to break free of the bezel and create sculptural twig-like forms in metal. The power and evocative poetry unleashed in this series remain fundamental characteristics of Bennett's work.

A maker of sensuous and richly layered sculptural forms in glass and metal, Sarah Perkins first became aware of Schwarcz's vessels in the mid 1970s, when she was an undergraduate at San Diego State University. She later met Schwarcz at a conference in San Francisco where they quickly became, as Perkins describes, "like long-lost sisters."[22] Perkins stated: "June's open vessels participate in a continuous tradition of domestic needs and activities. However, in their raw imperfection, formal restraint, and their subdued, controlled palette, these forms have a tremendous power that belies their domestic foundations."[23] Reflecting her dual interest in hand-raised sculptural forms in metal and richly colored enamel, Perkins's *Plique-à-jour Bowl* of 2006 compellingly contrasts a dark, rough exterior and a richly enameled interior, much like Schwarcz's work. The glazed piercings across the body of the vessel link the two realms, allowing light to pass through the crusty façade.

Numerous artists in other craft and design fields have also been inspired by Schwarcz's work. Chicago-based fiber artist Frank Connet is perhaps best known for his textiles produced using *mokume shibori*, a gathering, stitching, and dying process. He met Schwarcz in Sausalito in the fall of 2010. During his first visit, she introduced him to electroplating and encouraged him to explore the process, even offering to plate his first pieces. Connet began to produce a series of sculptural forms using fine copper mesh that was tied and bundled, enlisting the same techniques he used with the *shibori* textiles. He then immersed the mesh in a plating bath to create richly layered rigid metal sculpture. These highly original forms such as *Untitled #41* of 2013 share with Schwarcz's work the same protean power of natural accretions, stalactites, and crystalline salt deposits.

Schwarcz's creative approach to technique, form and content exerted a profound impact on contemporary enameling, metalwork, and related fields. Her interest in abstraction and in a process-oriented approach to enameling distinguished her work from that of her colleagues and caused many, especially a younger generation of artists, to reexamine the fundamental nature of the medium and its artistic and expressive potential. Constantly exploring new forms and techniques, she stated, "There are things to be said in enamel that cannot be said in any other medium. I do not believe the visual possibilities of enamel have begun to be exploited."[24] ◆

"THERE ARE THINGS TO BE SAID IN ENAMEL THAT CANNOT BE SAID IN ANY OTHER MEDIUM."

Bernard N. Jazzar and Harold B. Nelson, historians of 20th-century American enameling, are co-authors of the recently published Little Dreams in Glass and Metal: Enameling in America, 1920 to the Present, *and curators of the companion exhibition. They are preparing a monograph and exhibition for the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery titled,* "June Schwarcz: Invention and Variation," *to open in March 2017.*

Clockwise from top:

Sarah Perkins
Plique-à-jour Bowl, 2006
copper and enamel
3 3/8 x 4 1/4 x 4 1/4"

Jamie Bennett
Priori #9 (brooch), 1988
electroformed copper, enamel, gold foil
3/8 x 6 x 1"

William Harper
Labyrinth (brooch), 1984
gold, silver, enamel on copper, fine silver, amethyst, tourmaline, pearl, snail shell
3 3/4 x 1 1/2 x 3/4"
Photo: Jairo Ramirez

Frank Connet
Untitled #41, 2013
electroplated copper mesh, black patina
15 x 14 x 10"
Photo: Guy Nicol

1. About 1955 Schwarcz showed her work to Dominique Mailliard, a young curator at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. Mailliard found her work refreshing and, according to the artist, told her that it renewed his faith in enamels. She was included in the museum's inaugural exhibition the following year. / **2.** Schwarcz was also invited to do a series of three pieces for the 1959 exhibition demonstrating the basse-taille process. Two of those pieces are now in the collection of the Museum of Arts and Design. / **3.** Earlier Schwarcz had studied literature at the University of Colorado and the University of Chicago. But, deciding that she wanted to pursue a career in the visual arts and design, she enrolled at Pratt. / **4.** The couple purchased their home in Sausalito in 1954; however because Leroy's jobs necessitated regular moves, the family didn't settle there until 1958. / **5.** Schwarcz was first exposed to enameling through Terry Touff who had studied with a student of the preeminent Cleveland-based enamelist Kenneth Bates. / **6.** June Schwarcz, interview conducted by Arline M. Fisch, January 27, 2001. Transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; hereafter cited at Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **7.** While Schwarcz used basse-taille for most of her early work in enamel, her interest in this technique continued throughout her life. / **8.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **9.** Dr. Armin Kietzmann, "One-Man Shows: Boon to Town and Talent," *The San Diego Union*, December 1, 1957. / **10.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **11.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **12.** Kietzmann, "One-Man Shows: Boon to Town and Talent". / **13.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **14.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **15.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **16.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **17.** Fred Ball, "June Schwarcz – Enamelist," *Ceramics Monthly* 22 (March 1974): 32–33. / **18.** Schwarcz-Fisch interview. / **19.** William Harper, "Of June Schwarcz: Memory and Reminiscence," *June Schwarcz: Forty Years/Forty Pieces*. San Francisco: San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum, 1998. / **20.** Ibid. / **21.** In conversation with the authors, November 3, 2015. / **22.** In conversation with the authors, November 11, 2015. / **23.** Ibid. / **24.** June Schwarcz, "A New Significance for Enameling," Fourth National Conference of the American Craftsmen's Council, University of Washington, Seattle, August 26–29, 1961.

Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia *and* Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound

Museum of Arts and Design, New York City
5.3.16 – 9.25.16

by Ursula Ilse-Neuman

The name Harry Bertoia most readily brings to mind the iconic wire lattice *Diamond* chair he designed for Knoll in 1952. Far less familiar are Bertoia's jewelry and sound sculptures. The Museum of Arts and Design in New York gave its visitors a firsthand opportunity to experience a broader spectrum of Bertoia's creativity in its doubleheader. "Bent, Cast & Forged: The Jewelry of Harry Bertoia," which originated at Cranbrook Academy of Art in celebration of the centennial of the artist's birth, and "Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound," conceived by MAD as an immersive spatial and acoustic experience.

Bertoia (1915–1978) emigrated to the United States from Italy in 1930. He entered Cranbrook in 1938, then stayed on to head the metalwork studio, which had been closed since 1934. Although wartime metal rationing resulted in the department's closing again in 1943, Bertoia nevertheless succeeded in creating hundreds of highly inventive jewelry pieces during those years, which left an indelible mark on the field. An undisputed pioneer of modernist jewelry, he went on to incorporate many of the ideas he had explored on an intimate scale in his subsequent, more monumental metal sculptures.

The earliest piece of jewelry of the 30 on view at MAD was a 1935 pendant, whose cast and expertly fabricated silver chain exemplifies handcrafted metalwork in the Arts & Crafts tradition. However, the carved, semiprecious stones possess an economy of line and form more aligned with the highly polished, streamlined style of the hollowware he created around the same time (not featured in the exhibition). The remaining jewelry pieces radiate a spontaneous energy and reflect Bertoia's fascination with natural cycles of growth and decay. Wrought primarily in silver and brass, in gold for special gifts, and occasionally in scrap metals when supplies ran low, these necklaces and brooches frequently display the undisguised hammer marks and textured surfaces that reveal the touch of the hand, the hallmark of the American Studio Jewelry movement.

Like many of his Modernist contemporaries, Bertoia was inspired by the organic world and biology. Coupled with his interest in movement, the deceptively simple works disguise a sophisticated design reminiscent of the acrobatic balances Alexander Calder achieved in his jewelry as well as his sculptures. That Bertoia's jewelry succeeds in making such strong statements, even when displayed behind glass, is due in no small measure to the thoughtfully designed spun bronze supports on which they are mounted. Granted sufficient distance from each other, Bertoia's pieces can be appreciated as singular, independent works of art. The only nonwearable creation amongst the jewelry, the spectacular 20-inch-long 1942 brass *Ornamental Centipede*, appeared to swim through its glass display case.

Necklace, ca. 1942–43, brass, pendant length approx. 3 1/2" Collection of Cranbrook Art Museum, Photo: R. H. Hensleigh

Bucking an unfortunate trend towards providing only rudimentary labels, each piece of jewelry in the exhibition was accompanied by a succinct and lively text providing historical context, as well as information on how it was made. Monotype prints, many of them in color, were carefully chosen from the more than 4,000 Bertoia produced over his lifetime, and appropriately paired with the objects with which they are associated. These explorations of abstract shapes through the use of converging and intersecting planes, lines, or circles provide valuable windows into the creative thinking of this prolific artist.

The central focus then shifts dramatically from jewelry to Bertoia's remarkable sound sculptures. While Bertoia was working on a sculpture in 1960, a heavy wire broke and struck an adjoining rod, resulting in an astonishing sound that set him off on an exploration that would take up the next two decades of his life. Working from his Pennsylvania barn, Bertoia crafted a vast series of "Sonambient" sound sculptures using arrays of varying size rods, primarily in varicolored beryllium copper with its unique resonance. His massive bronze gongs are particularly electrifying, both visually and sonically. (Sadly, his use of beryllium alloys is thought to have hastened Bertoia's death, as inhaling the airborne particles can cause irreversible lung damage.) In an engaging environment replete with a listening room, Bertoia's performances are pictured in photographs, and one can listen to his recordings while sitting on one of Bertoia's famous metal chairs, which are still in production.

At the rear of the gallery, visitors are invited to step onto a stage on which they can set an array of sound sculptures produced by Bertoia's son, Val, into sonorous motion. Bertoia

wanted people without training to play his minimalist sculptures, stating that "whatever they did would be wonderful." And indeed, museum visitors were clearly captivated by interacting with the enchanted forest of waving metal rods. The haunting sounds created by these tonal sculptures have intrigued and influenced musicians from Brian Eno to the Kronos Quartet, and during the run of the exhibition, musicians were invited to create sound recordings within the installation.

The unique contributions of this multitalented midcentury artist, designer, and craftsman still resonate today. In defiance of sleek computer-designed and manufactured jewelry and electronic sound and virtual reality, Bertoia's handcrafted jewelry and tactile sound sculptures reconnect us to an artist's most vital creative forces.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman is Curator Emerita, with a specialty in contemporary jewelry, at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.

Mentoring as Art: Micki Lippe

WaterWorks Gallery
Friday Harbor, Washington
7.23.16 – 8.27.16

by Judith Wagonfeld

Today's graduating art students are often stymied by their next move. Lacking business acumen, they see earning a living through art as a pipe dream. "They need incubation," says Micki Lippe, a successful jewelry artist. In 1999 she inadvertently became a mentor when she fell behind on orders for her "Loosely Hinged" production line. Over the years, a succession of 17 new grads ripened in the safety net of her compact, airy studio. Like apprentices of old in an atelier, the brood replicated Lippe's designs while honing their torch and tool skills.

As a role model, Lippe dispensed priceless tips on gallery presentations, finances, and even shipping. She prodded her fledglings to enter juried exhibitions, craft shows, and galleries, nudging them out of the nest. Never wanting clones, she insisted they work part-time and short-term, in order to develop their individual art. At times she even had to "fire" some to cut the umbilical cord of dependence. "I like having young people around and being their cheerleader," Lippe says. "I tell them, you're not a doctor or lawyer whose skills are desperately needed. You're an artist and you have to build a market, convince people they want what you have."

"Mentoring as Art," at WaterWorks Gallery, brings together for the first time mentor and mentees, in an alumni update of "where they are now." Twelve participated; five declined due to constraints of concurrent exhibits—a striking testimony to the artists' success. Consider Lippe as root stock, a base for grafting diverse skills and spawning hybrids. The immensely varied styles on display, including three of Lippe's featherweight necklaces for comparison, display the fruit of her mentoring geared to foster independent creativity. Pieces equal and surpass her precision goals of craftsmanship, wearability, adornment, and beauty. Mostly, mentees steer clear of Lippe's organic oeuvre of quirky found objects, metalworked ornaments and semiprecious stones.

As the antithesis of Lippe's style, Nina Raizel Hartman's contemporary architectural rings tantalize. Impeccably fabricated geometric and basketlike settings accent glistening topaz, obsidian, labradorite, moonstone, and peridot. *Round Rainbow Obsidian*, a ring of open metalwork nestling a smoky gem, stands out for its sophistication.

Distorted organic and geometric constructions hint at nightmare narratives in Joana Kao's six silver brooches. Whimsical and strange, these palm-sized trinkets catch you off guard. *Adaptability* sports a tree growing from a wheeled cart, while *Road Trip* mimics the Guggenheim Museum's curves, transforming it into a road on which an auto climbs to a dead end.

In a mystical realm, Sarah Wilbanks fashions jewelry from semi-translucent colored polymers. Inspired by multihued, wild Hawaiian banana trees, Wilbanks fabricates three-sided seed pods and silver-edged flat leaves. *Wild Orchid,* an alluring necklace in muted pinks, grays, and greens softened under a sultry sun, evokes a tropical vacation.

In a conceptual vein, Venetia Dale's *Touchmarks: New Ocean Plastic* consists of a coat rack and a discarded plastic basket

Installation view of "Atmosphere for Enjoyment: Harry Bertoia's Environment for Sound" with interactive "Sonambient" sound sculptures.

Nina Raizel Hartman, *Round Rainbow Obsidian Ring*, 2016 sterling silver, rainbow obsidian

cast in pewter. Similarly, Adam Atkinson crafts articulated earrings and curios that dangle on rings. Segments overlap and undulate, an exploration of sexuality and the body.

Barbara Knuth, a community college metalsmithing instructor, won the 2015 Seattle Metals Guild's "Emerging Artist Award" for her elegant electroformed jewelry. This exhibit features stitched and folded copper mesh kneaded into jewelry pieces that weigh about as much as a handkerchief.

Jan Smith's minimalist brooches and neckpieces resemble veined rocks, twigs, scattered porcupine quills, wildflowers, mist, and windy shores. *Remembrance*, a neckpiece, alternates metal wheels with petals. An inner layer of brown felt reflects a nurturing earth.

In Karen Gilbert's *Choker Necklace*, clear Pyrex straw segments link to a line of metal ovals and rounds, which increase in size and culminate in a moss-like mound sprouting twigs of lampworked cypress green beads. Like a forest stroll, it imparts the vitality of clean air, tree trunks, earth, and lush plant life.

Of the work of 12 artists, only Amanda Bristow's jewelry shows Lippe's influence. She fabricates delicate chain necklaces and embellishes them with semiprecious stones, silver shells, and butterflies, and kitschy animal portraiture of crowned frog princes and rabbits in bow ties. In one sense the animals feel discordant, and yet they amuse and surprise.

Using Lippe's lessons, these disparate mentees carved a path to making contemporary work and earning money. Including imagery in the catalog from all 17 mentees would have created a more comprehensive record of Lippe's tutelage. Nonetheless, these artists prove that Lippe makes mentoring itself an art.

Judith Wagonfeld is a freelance writer living in Seattle.

Karin Herwegh Merging Memories *and* Jasmin Matzakow body x necklace x intention = base unit

Galerie Ra Amsterdam, The Netherlands
5.14.16 – 6.25.16

by Rebecca Hannon

Galerie Ra is the exuberant "grandfather" of contemporary jewelry galleries. Owner Paul Derrez has successfully blended life as maker, gallerist, and collector, and his stellar collection of mostly European work is an art jewelry pilgrimage site known to enthusiasts internationally. Unlike other well-known gallerists in the Netherlands, Derrez's focus has always been on quality. Exhibited works can be edition pieces, or one-of-a-kind, but must demonstrate innovation and be "of their time."

The space at Galerie Ra usually hosts two solo exhibitions of artists who have not worked together. This has the potential for discord, but in the case of Karin Herwegh's exhibition "Merging Memories" and Jasmin Matzakow's "body x necklace x intention = base unit," a holistic union was created. Both artists worked mainly with neckpieces, the form of jewelry that most fully fosters communication between wearer and viewer. Herwegh and Matzakow employ the world's oldest non-precious material, wood, which gains preciousness only through interaction with human hands.

Long shadows reflected on a pea green wall draw one into Herwegh's exhibition space. It is rare to be surprised given the ubiquitousness of images posted online, yet unlike anything I have seen in recent times, Karin's work knocked me out. Spare, monochromatic forms were lovingly whittled out of linden wood, and what appeared from a distance to be abstract, revealed upon closer inspection masked humans trading with animals. Herwegh's storytelling expressed through adornment reflects the darker fables of Europe; the stakes are high and the punishments extreme. In her artist statement Herwegh conveys a fascination with powerful forms from Polynesia and the Solomon Islands. Imagery gleaned from the Internet is transformed and enters her personal lexicon. Digital intervention ends there, as Herwegh works by herself in rural Holland, using simple analog tools, patience, and a commitment to her material. The narrative

Jan Smith, *Remembrance Necklace*, 2009 vitreous enamel, copper, sterling silver, felt

Karin Herwegh, *Planning Ahead* (necklace), 2016, beechwood, limewood, ebony, polyester thread, Photo: Karin Herwegh

Jasmin Matzakow, *Memories of Healing* (necklace), 2015, spruce wood, Shibuichi silver, Photo: Jasmin Matzakow

of a work is not preplanned; Herwegh allows relationships to form as elements emerge from wood. Through handwork, Herwegh hopes to get closer to what she sees as being lost in contemporary life—a connection to the unknown and mystical, as revealed through the process of making. A neckpiece called *Planning Ahead* presents delicately carved linden wood animal heads stained ghostly white and hung upside down, perhaps alluding to an untimely end. A swath of unmediated ebony wood provides counterpoint, and a macramé green oval becomes the cord connecting the assemblage. The delicate knotting of what might have been traditional women's work, taken to Calvinist extremes in its spare small loops, is the perfect counterbalance for the hard-edged wood block and conjuring of lost anthropomorphic souls. When the gallerist first exhibited Herwegh's work, a client was so affected she was moved to tears, and he in turn was similarly affected. Something powerful is happening in this work which is worth watching as Herwegh makes the transition from carved wax (cast in silver), to carved wood in this series with possibly larger scale works to come.

Jasmin Matzakow studied in both Halle, Germany and at Konstfack in Stockholm and has a long-term engagement with the role that adornment plays as both weapon and shield. Processes applied to wood evoke scarring, tattooing, and ultimately healing (associations suggested in Matzakow's 2016 artist statement). Matzakow wore one of her own neckpieces on opening night, interjecting a life force into a piece that appeared unwieldy lying akimbo on a table. Materials in this body of work are elemental; sawn and burned woods, horsehair, thick silver rod, and gnarled iron wire. Thoughtful connections between material and form, without the loss of the energy expended in creation, remind one of the directness and economy found in Alexander Calder's work.

Texts were given equal weight in Matzakow's show, where the artist riffed off quotes from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, probing questions concerning vulnerability, violence, and which (objects) will survive after our death. The installation challenged viewers to absorb the text and pieces concurrently, but I questioned if both were necessary as the adornment held a regenerative power that transcended words. Additional time spent contemplating *Memories of Healing* afforded me insight into a unique research-based practice that thoughtfully blends divergent ideas, fanned out in a rhizome pattern and finally cultivated into compelling jewelry. Thought and material inexorably yoked together.

Rebecca Hannon is an artist and educator based in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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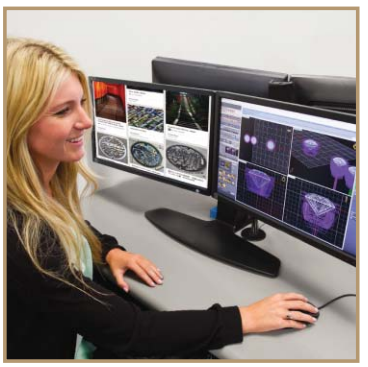

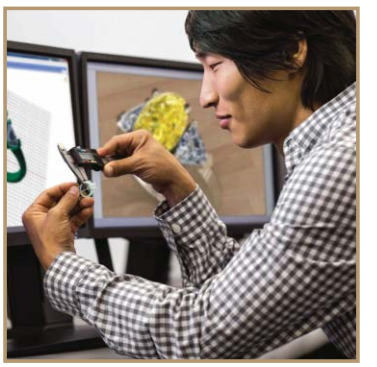

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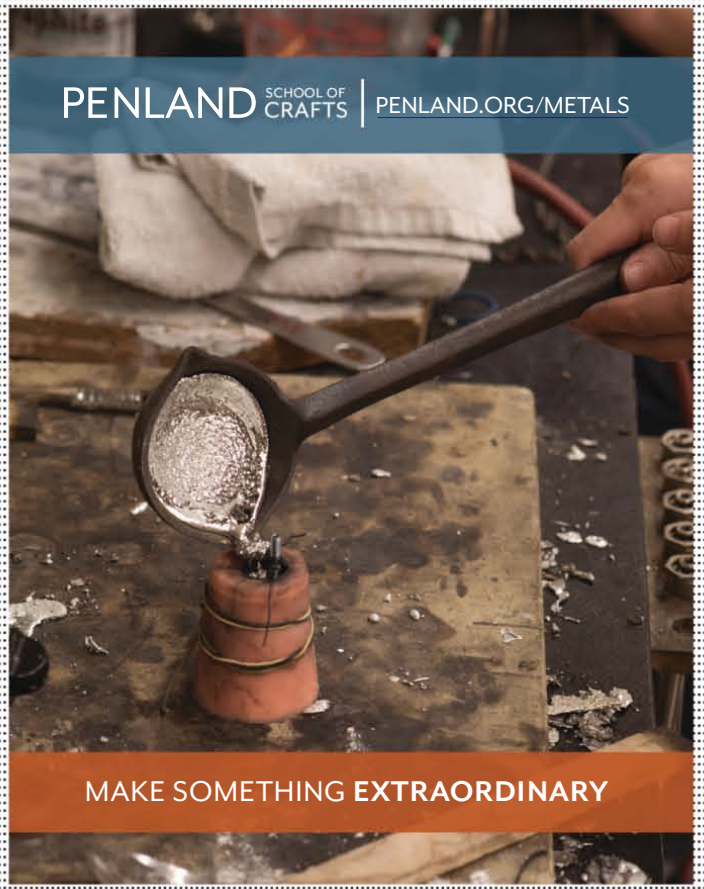

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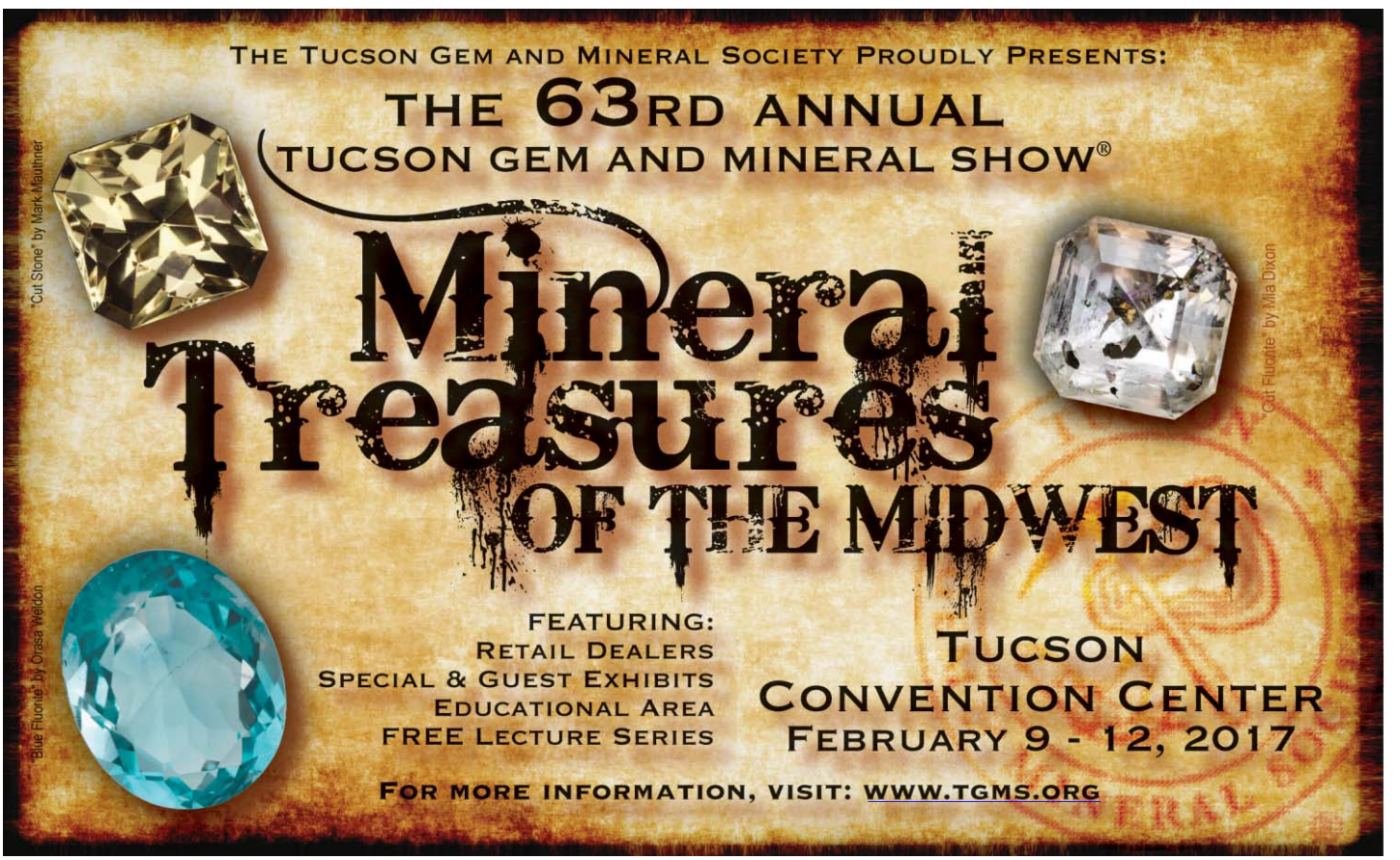

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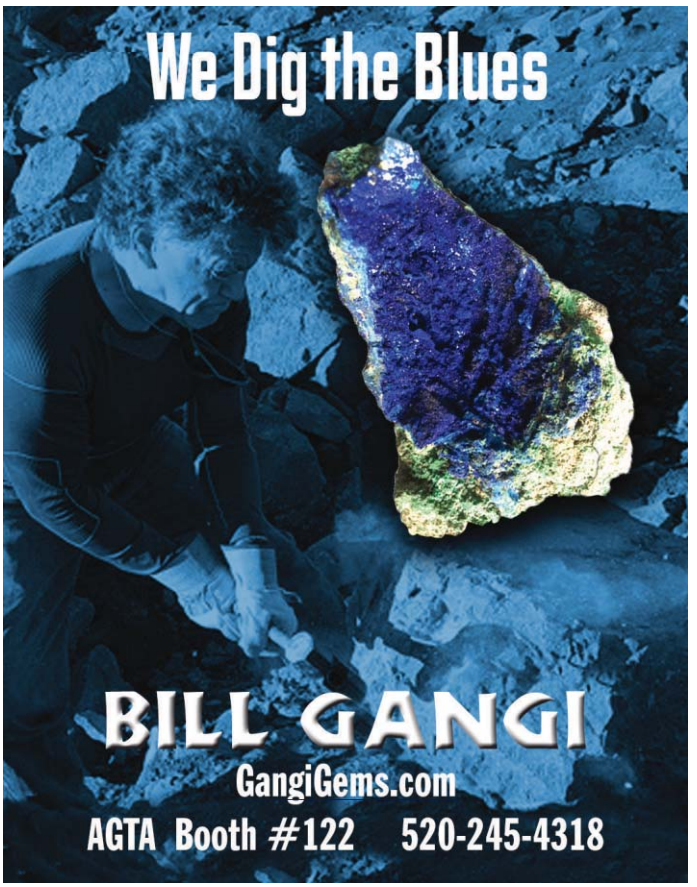
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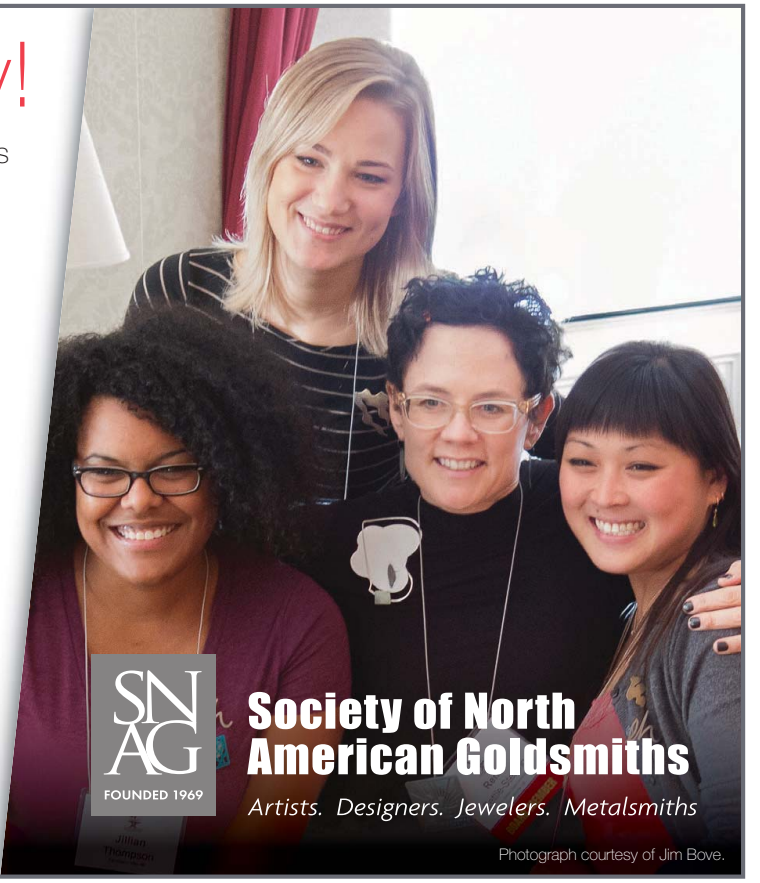

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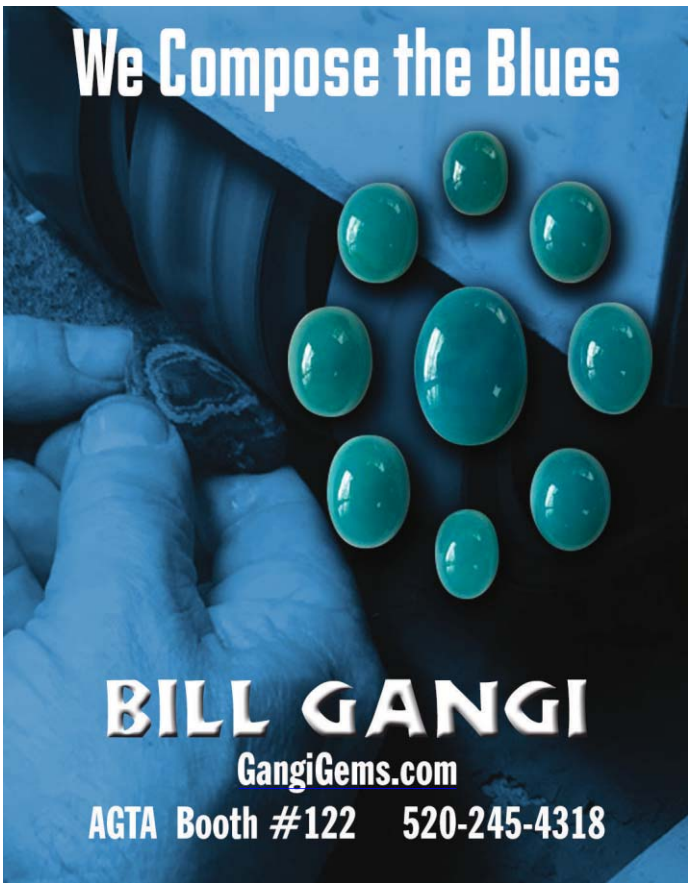

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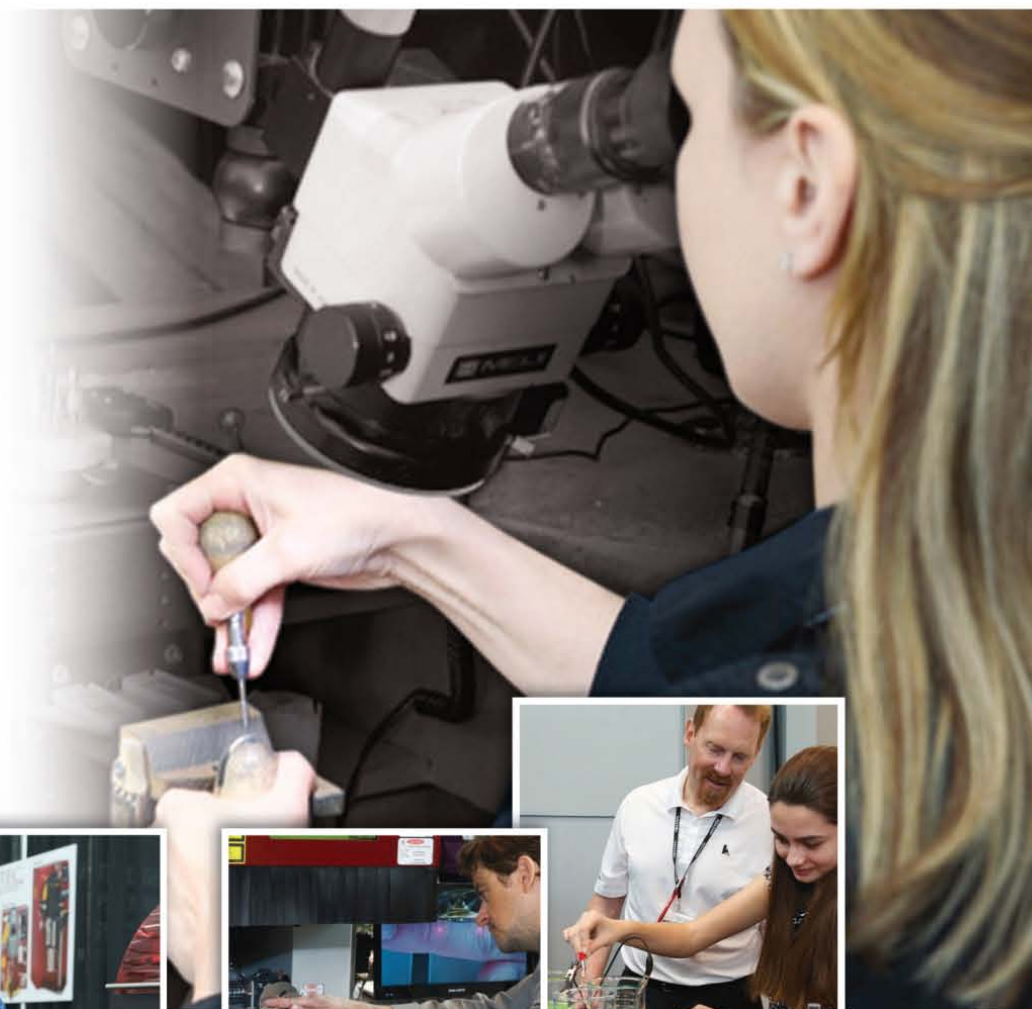

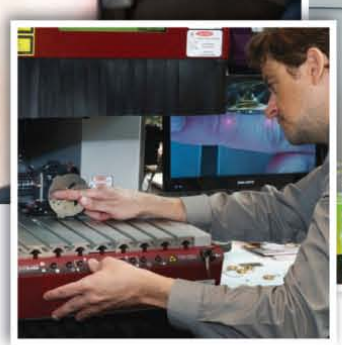

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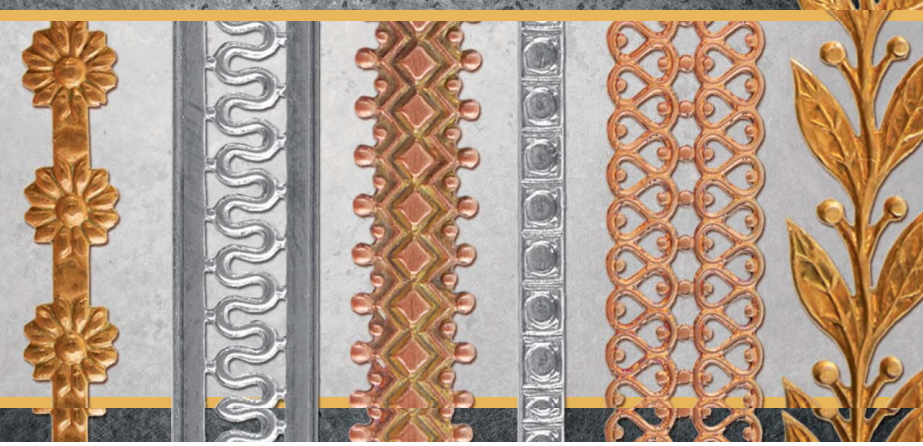

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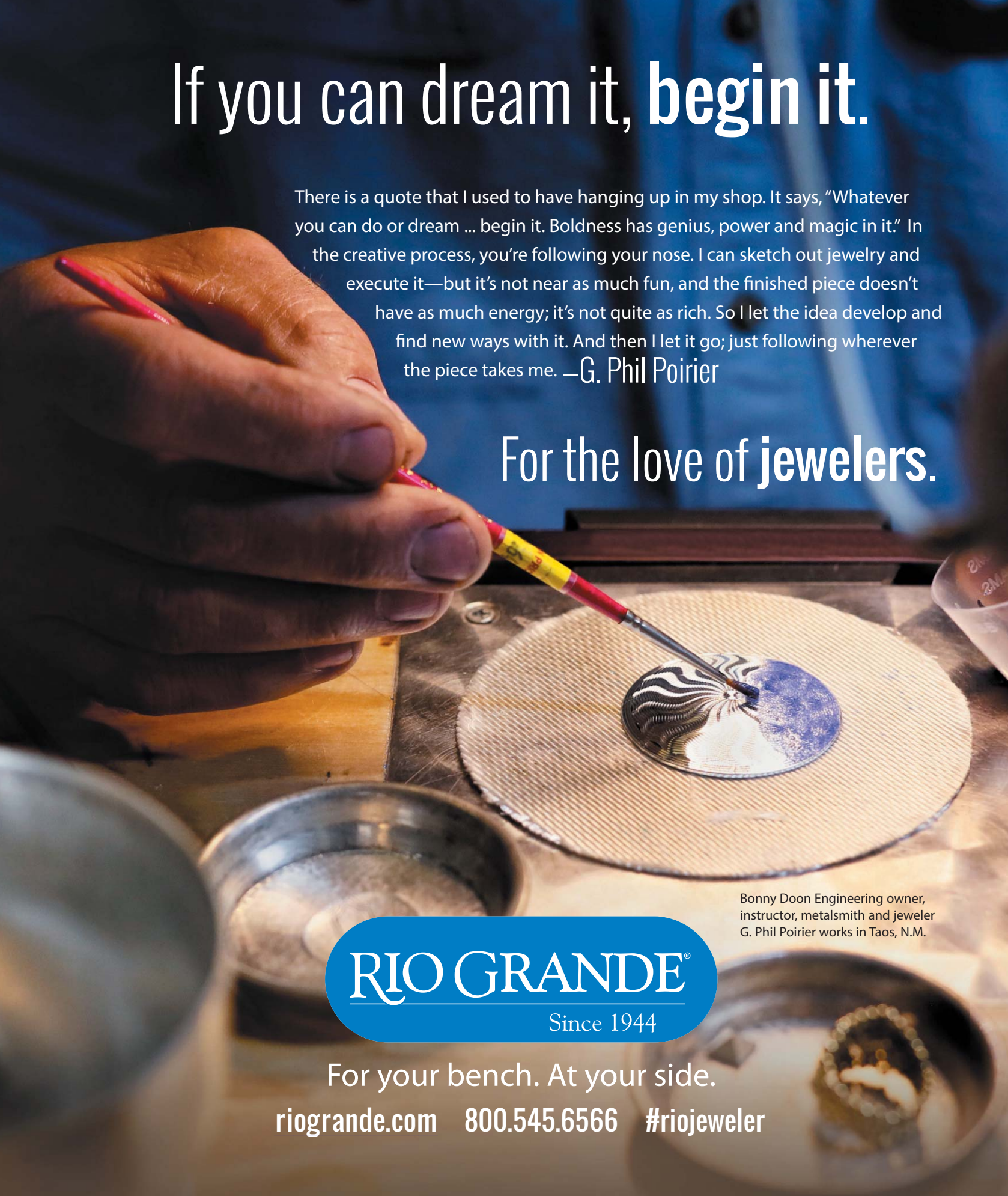

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